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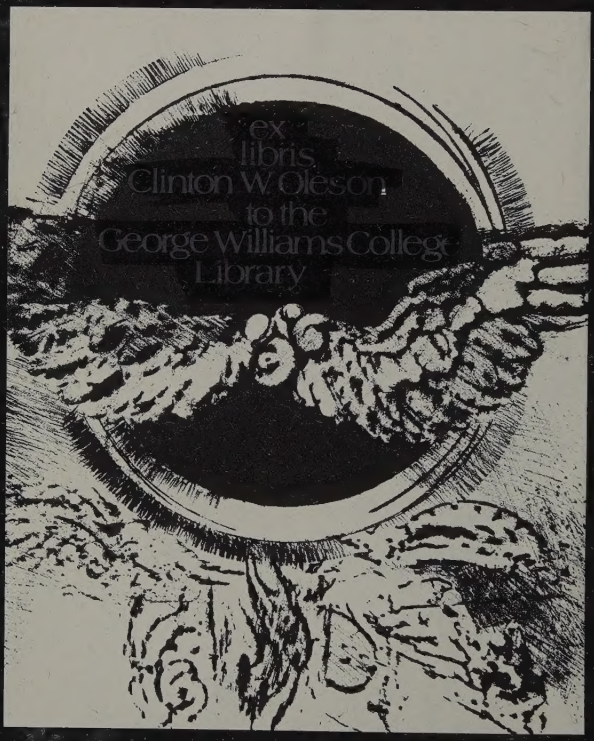
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MAXIM GORKI

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To

MARIA IGNATIEVNA ZAKREVSKAYA

I Dedicate the
Translation of this volume,
In all good-fellowship,
To
BENNETT A. CERF, Esq.,
B. G. G.

I

1

IVAN AKIMOVICH SAMGHIN loved originality; therefore, when his wife gave birth to his second son, Samghin, sitting by the bedside of the recently confined mother, began urging her:

"Do you know, Vera — let's give him some sort of rare name? All these countless Ivans and Basils have become a bore — eh?"

Tired out by the tortures of childbirth, Vera Petrovna made no answer. Her husband went off into deep thought for a moment; his dove-like eyes gazed out of the window toward the heavens where the clouds, tattered by the wind, were like ice breaking up on a river or the tufted tussocks of a swamp. Then Samghin anxiously began to enumerate, stabbing the air with his short, chubby finger:

"Christopher? Kyrik? Vukol? Nicodim?"

He dismissed each name with a gesture; only after having picked over some fifteen unusual names did he exclaim in satisfaction:

"Samson! Samson Samghin! — that's it! That's not bad! It's the name of a biblical hero, and as for the family name — my name itself is an odd one."

"Do not shake the bed," his wife begged him quietly.

He apologized, kissed her hand, grown powerless and strangely heavy. He listened awhile, smiling, to the malignant whistling of the autumn wind, to the piteous mewling of the child.

"Yes—Samson! The people have need of heroes. But I shall think it over a bit longer. Leonid, perhaps?"

"You are tiring Vera with trifles," sternly remarked Maria Romanovna, the midwife, who was diapering the newly born.

Samghin glanced at the bloodless face of his wife, smoothed her hair, of an unusual moon-gold tint, which was scattered in disorder over her pillow, and stepped noiselessly out of the bedchamber.

The mother was convalescing slowly in her lying-in; the infant was puny. Fearing he might not pull through, Vera Petrovna's mother, who was stout yet forever ailing, was hastening his baptism. Baptised he was, and Samghin, smiling guiltily, said:

"Verochka, at the last minute I have decided to christen him Clim. Clim! A name of the common folk, it does not obligate him to anything. Do you agree with me?"

Noticing the confusion of her husband in the face of general dissatisfaction of those in the family circle, Vera Petrovna approved:

"I like the name."

Her word was law in the family. As for Samghin, everyone had grown accustomed to his unexpected acts. He frequently astonished them with the oddity of his actions, but both in the family and among his acquaintances he enjoyed the reputation of a lucky man who met with easy success in everything.

Nevertheless, the unusual name of the child made him conspicuous from the very first days of his life.

"Clim?" friends would ask, scrutinizing the boy attentively. "But why Clim?"

Samghin would explain:

"I wanted to call him Nestor, or Antipas—but, d'you know, this requires the silliest of ceremonies, with priests, and with 'Do you abjure Satan?' and with all sorts of mumbo-jumbo. . . ."

But Samghin's explanations could not prevent even those in the house from regarding the newly born more attentively than his two-year-old brother, Dmitri. Each had his reasons. Clim was puny, and this intensified his mother's love. The father felt guilty because he had given his son a name that had not come off at all well; his grandmother, finding that his name smacked of the *mouzhik*, deemed that the child had been wronged; while the child-loving grandfather, the organizer and honourable guardian of a trade school for orphans, was infatuated with pedagogics and with hygiene, and, openly preferring the rather weakly Clim to the robust Dmitri, also oppressed his grandson with his intensified solicitude concerning him.

2

The first years of Clim's life were the years of desperate struggle for liberty and culture on the part of those few people who manfully and defencelessly placed themselves "twixt the hammer and the anvil"—between the rule of an ungifted scion of a talented German princess and an illiterate people grown dull in the bondage of serfdom. Rightfully hating the might of the Czar, these honest folk with great sincerity fell in love with "the people," sight unseen, and set forth to resurrect it, to deliver it. In order to make the *mouzhik* easier to love, he was imagined as a being of exceptional spiritual beauty; he was adorned with the crown of an innocent martyr, with the nimbus of a saint. His physical tortures were exalted above those moral tortures which the hideous actuality of Russia was heaping generously upon the best men in the land.

The angry moan of the most sensitive poet[1] of the epoch was the sorrowful hymn of that period, and his question, addressed to the people, emphasized the general alarm:

Filled with fresh strength wilt thou greet the new day,
Or, yielding to the law the Fates make known,
Hast thou wrought what within thy power lay?
Hast made a song that is like to a moan,
And let thy spirit sink to rest for aye?

The amount of suffering experienced by the fighters for the freedom of creating culture is incalculable. But arrests, imprisonment, exile, meted out to hundreds of young people — these have always inflamed and sharpened youth's fight against the enormous soulless mechanism of power.

In this struggle the family of the Samghins had suffered with the rest. Jacob, the elder brother of Ivan, after spending almost two years in prison, was exiled to Siberia. When he attempted to escape from his exile he was caught, and banished to Turkestan. Ivan Samghin himself had not escaped arrest and imprisonment, and even after his release he was expelled from the University. A cousin of Vera Petrovna's, the husband of Maria Romanovna, had died during a stage of the convict journey into Yalutorovsk, whither he had been exiled.

In the spring of '79 came the crack of the desperate shot of Soloviev. The reigning powers replied to it by Asiatic repressions.

Thereupon several score of resolute people, men and women, entered upon a hand-to-hand fight with the despotic potentate. For two years they hunted him as a wild beast is hunted. Finally they slew him, and were immediately betrayed by one of their own comrades who himself had tried to kill Alexander II, but who also had torn the wires of the mine laid in the path of the oncoming train of the Czar. The son of the assassinated czar, Alexander III, had rewarded with the title *pochëtnyi grazhdanin,* " Honourable Burgess," the man who had attempted the murder of his father.

When the heroes had been destroyed, they — as is always the case — were found guilty because, having aroused hopes, they had not been able to fulfil them. People who with benevolent inclination had been following the uneven struggle from a distance, were even more discouraged by their heroes' defeat than those intimate friends of the fighters who remained alive. Many without loss of time prudently shut the doors of their houses in the faces of the fragments of this group of heroes, who but the day before were arousing rapture. Today they could only compromise.

There was gradually arising a skeptical criticism of "the significance of personality in the creative process of history," a criticism which ten years later gave place to inordinate rapture before a new hero, the "blond beast" of Friedrich Nietzsche. The people were rapidly gaining in wisdom and, agreeing with Spencer that "one cannot out of leaden instincts work out a golden conduct," were concentrating their powers and talents upon "the knowledge of one's own self," upon questions of individual being. They were rapidly approaching acceptance of the shibboleth: "Our time is not a time of broad problems."

A most genial artist [2] who felt the power of evil with such amazing finesse that he appeared to be its creator — a devil who was revealing his own self — this artist, in a land where the majority of the upper classes were slaves, like their servants, was hysterically screaming: "Reconcile thyself, proud man! Be patient, proud man!"

And, immediately after him, with no lesser volume, sounded the voice of another genius [3] imperiously and persistently affirming that there was but one path leading to liberty, the path of "resisting not evil with force."

3

The house of the Samghins was one of those, rare even then, in which the owners did not hasten to put out all the lights. The house was visited occasionally by certain folk far from gay and not at all easy to get along with. They would take their seats in the corners of the rooms, in the shadows. They spoke little, and even their smiles were not pleasant. Though of various statures and differently dressed, they all bore a strange resemblance to one another, like soldiers from the same squad. They were "not of this place"; they were going off somewhere. They appeared at Samghin's only as at a halfway house; sometimes they would stay the night. They also resembled one another in that they all listened submissively to the angry remarks of Maria Romanovna, and evidently feared her. As for the paternal Samghin, he feared these visitors. Little Clim saw how his father guiltily rubbed his soft, kindly hands before each one of them, and how his leg muscles twitched nervously. One of these men, black-bearded and probably very miserly, had burst out angrily:

"Everything in your house, Ivan, is stupid as in an Armenian anecdote. There is ten times as much as is necessary of everything. For some reason I was given two pillows and two candles for the night!"

The circle of Samghin's acquaintances in the city had narrowed considerably, but still of evenings there would gather in his place a few people who had not yet spent the mood of yesterday. And every evening from the wing of the house, in the depth of the courtyard, Maria Romanovna majestically appeared, tall, bony, in dark spectacles, with an offended expression on her face, her lips invisible, and a little black cap of lace on her half-grey hair. From underneath the little cap her large ears stuck out austerely. From the second floor descended their tenant, Varavka, broad-

shouldered, red-bearded. He resembled a drayman who had suddenly grown rich and, having bought some ill-fitting garments, had pulled them on himself to his own discomfort. He moved about ponderously, carefully, but nevertheless his shoes scraped loudly. His feet were oval, like fish platters. Before sitting down at table to have tea he would cautiously test the chair — Was it strong enough? Upon him and all around him everything would rip, creak, and shake; the furniture and the dishes feared him, and when he walked past the piano the strings hummed. Dr. Somov would appear, black-bearded and somber. Stopping on the threshold he would scrutinize everybody with his bulging stony eyes below brows that resembled moustaches, and ask hoarsely: "Everybody hale and hearty?"

Then he would step into the room, and behind his broad, round-shouldered back there always appeared the doctor's wife, rather thin, yellow-faced, with enormous eyes. Having kissed Vera Petrovna in silence, she would bow to everybody in the room, as if they were icons in a church, then take a place as far away from them as she could, and sit there as if she were in the reception room of a dentist, covering her mouth with her handkerchief. Her eyes would be fixed on whichever corner was the darkest, as if she were expecting, at any moment, that out of the darkness someone would call to her: "Come!"

Clim knew she was awaiting death. Dr. Somov, in his presence and hers, had said:

"Never have I met any person who fears death as foolishly as my wife does."

Imperceptibly and unexpectedly in some corner in the gloom there would rise up a red-haired man, the teacher of Clim and Dmitri, Stepan Tomilin. Then Tanya Kulikova, who was always excited, would dash in, a dull girl with a queer nose pitted with smallpox. She always carried books with her, all written over

with lilac ink. She would jump at everybody, and in a muffled low voice hurry them:

"Come, let's read—let's read!"

Vera Petrovna calmed her:

"Let us first drink our tea. Let the servants go, and then. . . ."

"One has to be careful with the servants," Dr. Somov cautioned. He shook his head. On the crown, among his rumpled locks, there gleamed a grey, round bald spot. The grown-ups drank tea at a round table, in the center of the room, under a lamp with a broad shade which was Samghin's own invention. The shade reflected the light, not downward upon the table, but toward the ceiling. Because of this a dreary half-gloom pervaded all parts of the room except one corner where, near a tub holding an enormous rhododendron, was placed the children's table, lit by a small lamp. The black, paw-like leaves of the plant, crawled over the walls upon the stalks tied with cord to nails; their roots hung in the air like long grey worms.

The staid, rather fat Dmitri always sat with his back to the big table, but Clim, slender and spare, with his hair cut roundly *à la mouzhik*, would seat himself with his face to the grown-ups, attentively listening to their talk until the time when his father would begin exhibiting him.

Almost every evening his father, having called Clim to him, would squeeze the boy's hips between his soft knees, and ask:

"Well, now, little *mouzhik*, what, according to you, is the best thing of all?"

Clim would answer:

"When they're burying a general."

"And why?"

"Because the music plays."

"And what is the worst thing of all?"

"If my mamma's head aches."

"How's that?" Samghin then inquired triumphantly of his guests, while his funny round face took on a kindly glow. The guests, smiling a bit, always praised Clim; but he no longer liked having his mind shown off. He found these answers rather silly. He had given them for the first time two years before. Now he submitted condescendingly to this amusement, seeing that it pleased his father. He really felt it somehow offensive, as though he were like a plaything that squeaks when you squeeze it.

4

From the stories his father, his mother, and his grandmother told the guests, Clim had learned about himself things that were amazing and important. It seemed that even when he was very little he had been markedly different from his companions.

"The simple, coarse toys were more to his liking than the intricate and expensive ones," his father would say, very quickly, sputtering over his words. Clim's grandmother, shaking her grey, splendidly coiffured head, would corroborate, sighing:

"Yes, yes—he loves the simple things."

And in her turn she would tell how, when he was only five years old, Clim had tenderly nursed a frail flower which sprang up by chance in a shady corner of the garden, among weeds; how he watered it, paying no attention to the flowers in the nearby beds. When this flower perished, in spite of all his care, Clim wept long and bitterly.

Without listening to his mother-in-law, his father would say:

"He plays with the grandson of his nurse far more willingly than with the children of his own circle. . . ."

His father was better at telling a story than his grandmother,

and the story was always something that the boy had not remarked about himself, something which he did not feel within him. At times it would even seem to Clim that his father invented the words and actions of which he spoke, that he invented them in order to boast of his son, even as he boasted of the amazing accuracy of the movement of his watch, or his skill in card games.

But more often Clim, as he listened to his father, would wonder how he, Clim, could have forgotten what his father remembered. No, his father had not invented these things; why, did not his mother also say that in him, in Clim, there was much of the unusual? She even had an explanation of how this had come about.

"He was born in a year of alarms. During that year we had the fire, the arrest of Jacob, and much else besides. It was painful to carry him. His birth was somewhat premature — I believe that is the reason he is so strange."

Clim listened to her. It was as if she were apologizing or asking "Isn't it so?" The guests would agree with her: "Yes, one can understand that."

On one occasion, after an unsuccessful display of his mentality before the guests, Clim asked his father:

"Why am I unusual, and why is Mitya usual? Wasn't he, too, born when everybody was being hanged?"

His father explained to him at great length, but of all he said Clim remembered only one thing: there are yellow flowers, and there are red ones. He, Clim, was a red flower; yellow flowers are dreary.

His grandmother, looking askance and not at all amiably at her son-in-law, would stubbornly repeat that the funny *mouzhik* name was having a bad influence on the character of her grandson. The children, she said, called Clim *Clin* (wedge), which

was offensive to the boy, and for that reason he preferred the grown-ups. "It is very bad for him," she would complain.

With all this old grandfather Akim — an enemy of his grandson and of all people, tall, round-shouldered, and as dry as a withered tree — would never agree. He had a long face, with a beard parted in two, which reached from his ears to his shoulders, while his chin was bare, clean-shaven like his upper lip. His nose was heavy, blueish; his eyes were grown over with grey brows. His long legs did not bend; his long hands with crooked fingers stirred unwillingly, unpleasantly; he was always clad in a long brown frock, and shod in velvet boots with soft soles, lined with fur. He walked about with a stick, like a night watchman. The end of his stick was padded with leather, so that it would not knock on the floor but slap and scrape as softly as did the soles of his boots. He was exactly what they called him, a "veritable ancient," who sat with both his hands propped up on his stick, as do old men on the benches of city parks.

"All this is the most obnoxious bosh," he grumbled. "You are all spoiling the child — you are inventing him."

A dispute would immediately blaze up between his father and his grandfather. His father would try to prove that everything that is good on earth came about through invention; that invention started with the apes, from whom man had sprung. Then his grandfather would angrily scrape his stick on the floor, tracing ciphers with it, and cry out in his grating voice:

"What utter bosh!"

No one could get the better of his father in arguing. The rapid flow of words from his father's lips would warn Clim that at any instant his grandfather would brandish his stick in a hopeless gesture, would straighten up — huge, like a rearing circus horse — and would go off to his room, while Clim's father would cry after him: "You are a misanthrope!"

It always ended like that.

Clim knew very well that his grandfather was trying in every way possible to degrade him, whereas all the other grown-ups were solicitously trying to elevate him. The old man asserted that Clim was simply a puny, languid boy, and that there was nothing unusual about him. He played with inferior toys merely because the better ones were taken away from him by more lively children. He made friends with the grandson of the nurse because Ivan Dronov was more stupid than the children of Varavka and accorded the spoiled Clim that special attention his great self-love demanded.

It hurt Clim to hear this; it aroused enmity toward his grandfather, and made Clim timid with him. Clim believed his father: everything that was worth while was the result of invention — playthings, candy, books with pictures, poems — everything. When ordering dinner grandmother frequently said to the cook: "Leave me alone! Invent something yourself." It was always necessary to invent something, otherwise no one of the grown-ups would notice you; you would be a nonentity, as if you were not Clim, but Dmitri.

5

Clim could not recall when, precisely, after having noticed that he was being "invented," he himself began inventing. But he remembered well those of his ideas which met with success. On one occasion long ago he had asked Varavka: "Why is your family name so much like an insect's? Aren't you Russian?"

"I am a Turk," answered Varavka. "My real name is Bey Nepalkoi Akopeikoi.[4] Bey is the Turkish for 'Sir.'"

"That is not a name at all, but one of nurse's proverbs," said Clim. Varavka seized hold of Clim and started tossing him to the ceiling — lightly, as though Clim were a ball. Soon after this

the unpleasant Dr. Somov, whose breath smelled of vodka and salted fish, began to annoy him. Clim necessarily had to invent the conceit that the doctor's family name was round, like a little keg. The idea also came to his that grandfather spoke with lilac words. But when he said that people were angry in a summer manner and in a winter manner, the lively daughter of Varavka, Lidia, angrily cried out: "It was I said that — I was the first, not he!"

Clim, abashed, turned scarlet.

It was not easy to invent: Clim knew that it was precisely because of this that everybody in the house, with the exception of the old grandfather, loved him more than they loved his brother Dmitri. Once when they were going for a boat ride, and Clim with his brother had run ahead of Dr. Somov, who was walking slowly arm-in-arm with their mother, the doctor had said to her: "There, Vera, go two; yet they are ten — because one of them is zero while the other is one." Clim immediately surmised that the zero was his dumpling-shaped, boresome and dreary little brother, who bore an amusing resemblance to his father. From that day on he called his brother a "yellow zero," though Dmitri was rather rosy and had blue eyes.

Having remarked that the grown-ups were always expecting from him something that was lacking in other chidren, Clim strove, after the evening teas, to sit as much as possible with the older people, near the torrent of words from which he dipped his wisdom. Attentively listening to the endless disputes, he was able to snatch up those words which especially impressed him, and later he would ask his father what they meant. Ivan Samghin would gladly explain the meanings of "misanthrope," "radical," "atheist," *kulturtreger;* then he would caress his son, and praise him: "You are a smart chap. Keep on being curious — it is a useful thing."

His father, though very pleasant, was less interesting than Varavka. It was difficult to understand what his father said. He talked so much and so rapidly that his words crushed one another. His speech recalled the foaming of beer, or of bread cider coming up in bubbles out of the neck of a bottle. Varavka said little, and in large words like those one sees on signs. His little greenish eyes sparkled gayly in his red face; his reddish beard in its splendour resembled the brush of a fox; in his beard stirred a great, ruddy smile; having smiled, Varavka would lick his lips with his long glistening tongue. Indubitably he was the very cleverest of men. He never agreed with anybody and he instructed all, even the ancient grandfather, who also lived in perpetual disagreement with everybody.

"Russia has but one path," the old man would say, emphasizing his remark by thumping his stick. But Varavka would shout at him: "Are we Europe, or are we not?"

He was forever saying that one wouldn't go far with the *mouzhik* for a steed; there was but one horse capable of moving the cart from its place — the intelligentsia. Clim knew that the intelligentsia consisted of his father, his grandfather, his mother, all their acquaintances, and, of course, of Varavka himself, who was capable of moving from its place any heavy cart whatsoever. But it was strange that the doctor, who was also a powerful man, did not agree with Varavka. The doctor, his black eyes bulging with anger, would shout:

"What all this means, the devil only knows!"

Maria Romanovna, straightening up like a soldier, would say sternly:

"You ought to be ashamed, Varavka!"

Once she stalked out, red with wrath, at the most heated moment of the dispute, stopping at the door only long enough to threaten:

"Come to your senses, Varavka! You are standing on the boundary of treason!"

Varavka, sitting on the very strongest chair, laughed loudly, while the chair under him creaked.

Rubbing his chubby, warm palms, Clim's father began:

"Pardon me, Timophei! On the one side, of course, there are the practical intelligentsia, putting their energy into industrial activities and penetrating into the apparatus of government. On the other side are the behests of the recent past. . . ."

"On all sides you speak poorly," snapped Varavka. Clim concurred: Yes, his father was speaking poorly, and forever justifying himself, as though he had been up to mischief. Clim's mother, also, agreed with Varavka.

"Timophei Vassilievich is right!" she would declare. "Life has proved more complicated than people thought. We have taken much on faith; it is necessary to look matters over."

She spoke but little, then calmly and in simple words, and only very rarely did she grow angry. When she did, it was not in the "summer manner," noisily and stormily, like Lidia's mother, but in the "winter manner." Her handsome face would pale, her eyebrows lower. Lifting her magnificently coiffured head, she would calmly look past the person who had provoked her wrath and utter a short simple reproof.

When she looked in that way at his father it seemed to Clim that the distance between the two was widening, although neither one moved from the spot. Once she grew very angry, in the "winter manner," at the teacher, Tomilin, who had been drearily discoursing at great length about two truths: the truth of verity and the truth of justice.

"Enough!" said she in a low voice, at which all fell silent. "Enough of fruitless sacrifices. Magnanimity is naïve. It is time to grow wiser."

"Why, you have gone out of your mind, Vera!" Maria Romanovna, horrified, rose and stamped disapprovingly out of the room on her heels, which were broad as horseshoes.

Clim could not remember that his mother had ever been abashed, as his father was frequently. Only once had he seen her confused, and then inexplicably. She had been hemming handkerchiefs, and Clim had asked her:

"Mamma, what does it mean: 'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, nor thy neighbor's wife'?"

"Ask your teacher," she had answered; then, blushing, had corrected hastily, "No, ask your father."

When their conversation was interesting and comprehensible, Clim found it to his advantage to have the grown-ups forget about him; but if the disputes fatigued him, he would at once call their attention to himself, and his mother or father would be amazed: "What—are you still here?"

The dispute about the two truths was boring. Clim asked:

"And how can people know when truth is truth and when it is not the truth?"

"Eh? Look at that!" his father exclaimed, winking at the other.

Varavka, hugging Clim, answered him:

"The truth, brother, is known by its smell. It has an acrid odour."

"An odour of what?"

"Of onions, of horseradish! . . ." Everyone laughed, but Tanya Kulikova remarked sadly:

"Ah, how true that is! Truth, too, draws tears—isn't that so, Tomilin?"

The teacher, in silence, carefully edged away from her, while Tanya's ears grew rosy. With her head at one side, she gazed long at the floor without stirring.

6

Clim soon began to notice that in the "truth" of the grown-ups there was something unauthentic, something fabricated. They spoke frequently of the Czar and of "the people." The short grating word "Czar" evoked no image in his mind until the occasion when Maria Romanovna had followed it with another word, "Vampire," flinging out the word with such a violent toss of her head that her spectacles jumped up above her brows.

Clim heard, and imperceptibly to himself came to believe, that the Czar was of the military, very evil and cunning; that he had "deceived all the people."

The word "people" was amazingly capacious: it embraced the most diverse emotions. The people were spoken of pityingly and deferentially, joyously and solicitously. Tanya Kulikova seemed to envy the people for some reason or other; his father styled them "martyrs"; while Varavka called the same people gaping dolts.

Clim knew that the people consisted of *mouzhiks* and country wives. They all lived in villages. On Wednesdays they went into town to sell firewood, mushrooms, potatoes, and cabbages. But these people he distinguished from the other real "people" he heard spoken of so often and solicitously, about whom poems were composed, who were pitied and beloved of all, and whose happiness was so whole-souledly desired.

The real "people" Clim imagined as an incomputable horde of men of enormous stature, unhappy and awesome, like the mysterious beggar Vavilov. Vavilov was a tall old man. His hair, curly as a sheepskin, covered his head like a cap. A dirty grey beard had grown over his face from his eyes to his neck, until the livid knob of his nose was barely perceptible on his face. There was no mouth at all to be seen, while in place of eyes there dimly glimmered fragments of turbid glass. When Vavilov would

roar under the windows "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us!" a dark pit would gape in his impenetrable beard. Out of it stuck three black fierce teeth, and his tongue, thick and round like a pestle, stirred ponderously.

The grown-ups spoke of him with compassion and gave him alms deferentially. It seemed to Clim that they were all guilty of something before this beggar, were almost afraid of him, even as Clim was afraid. His father would rhapsodize:

"This is Ilya Murometz,[5] to whom a hurt has been done. . . . He is the proud might of the people. . . ."

As for Clim's nurse, Eugenia, who was round and stout as a barrel, she would threaten when the children became too mischievous: "Wait, I am going to call Vavilov!"

According to her, this beggar was a hardened sinner. In a year of famine he had sold the people flour mixed with sand and plaster. For this he had been brought to trial and had spent nearly all of his money in bribing the judges. Now, although he had sufficient means to live modestly without charity, here he was, still playing beggar.

"He does it out of malice, just to make folks uncomfortable," she would say, and Clim believed her stories rather than his father's.

It was all very difficult to understand: Just what were "the people"? One summer Clim, Dmitri and their grandfather had ridden off to a hamlet where a fair was being held. Clim gaped at the crowds of *babi* (country wives) and *mouzhiks,* all in gala array. Amazed at the enormous throng of these half-tipsy, very jolly, and kind-hearted country folks, Clim turned to his grandfather:

"But where are the real people, 'they who moan in the fields, on the highways, in prisons, in gaols; who camp under their carts on the steppe when day fails'?" Clim questioned naïvely

in the rhetorical phrases of a poem he had been made to memorize and recite before guests.

The old man laughed, pointing to the crowd with his stick: "Those are the very same people, you little fool!" But Clim would not believe him. Later, when some houses were burning on the outskirts of the city, and Tomilin brought Clim to look at the fire, he repeated his question. No one of the throng of spectators was willing to pump water. Finally policemen dragged out of the crowd by their coat collars those men who were most poorly dressed, and with their fists drove them to the engines.

"What people!" grumbled Clim's teacher, puckering up his face.

"Why, are these the people?" asked Clim.

"Well, and who else should they be, according to you?"

"And are the firemen also the people?"

"Of course; they are not angels."

"Then why are the firemen working alone? Why aren't the people helping them to put out the fire?

Tomilin discoursed long and tediously of those who looked on and of those who did the work; but Clim, comprehending nothing his teacher was saying, broke in:

"But when do the people moan?"

"I'll tell you about that later," promised the teacher. But he never did.

A more definite but curiously unpleasant conception of the nature of "the people" was created in Clim's mind during a conversation with his father. It was twilight of an autumn evening, and the elder Samghin, half-undressed, downy as a chick, was curled snugly in the corner of a divan — he had an amazing talent for making himself comfortable. Clim laid his head on Samghin's wool-clad chest, stroking with his hand his father's cheeks, which had the texture of kid gloves but were firm as a

new rubber ball. His father asked him what grandmother had spoken about during the lesson on theology.

"About the sacrifice of Abraham."

"Aha. And how did you interpret the story?"

Clim told him that God had ordered Abraham to slay Isaac; that when Abraham was about to cut the lad's throat, God had said: "It is not necessary. Thou had'st better slay a ram." Clim's father chuckled. Then, hugging his son, he explained that this story should be understood as follows:

"Al-le-go-ri-cal-ly. God—that is the people. Abraham is the leader of the people. He gives his son in sacrifice, not to God, but to the people. You see how simple it is?"

Yes, it was simple enough; but it did not satisfy the boy. He pondered awhile, then asked:

"You mean that the people is a martyr?"

"Why, yes! That is why it demands sacrifices. Every martyr demands sacrifices—all of them, and always."

"But why?"

"You little ignoramus! In order not to suffer. That is, in order that it, the people, may be taught to live without suffering. Christ is also an Isaac. God his Father gave him up as a sacrifice to the people. Do you understand? There you have the same story as the one about Abraham's sacrifice."

Clim again became thoughtful, and finally asked cautiously:

"Are you a leader of the people?"

This time it was his father whose brows contracted in thought. But soon his face cleared.

"Do you see, we are all Isaacs—yes. For instance, Uncle Jacob, who has been exiled; Maria Romanovna; and, in general, all our acquaintances. If not all, at least most of the intelligentsia are bound to offer up their powers as a sacrifice to the people."

His father talked on for a long time, but the boy no longer

listened. After that evening the people arose before him in a new light, no less misty than before, yet even more fear-inspiring.

It seemed to Clim that the farther he went, the more difficult it became to understand the grown-ups, the more difficult to believe them.

Clim's old grandfather took great pride in his school for orphans; his stories about it were always interesting. Once he took his grandsons with him to a Christmas celebration in this much-lauded school, and Clim saw scores of puny boys garbed in blue-and-white striped stuff, such as female prisoners wore. All the boys had shaven heads. Many bore scrofulous sores on their faces. Like little lead soldiers come to life, they stood around the scraggly fir tree in three rows, in the form of the Greek letter Π. and they looked at it greedily, frightened and extremely bored. A stout little man with a bare scalp appeared. His large girth, short stature and yellow face devoid of moustache and eyebrows made him seem a hideously bloated replica of one of the pupils. He swung up his arms, and all the boys fell at once into desperate song:

Oh, thou freedom, thou my freedom,
Thou my freedom all of gold!

Opening their mouths like fish on dry land, the boys rendered praise to the Czar:

Our own father must have known,
Of our sorry days — our need —
Must have seen our tears of sorrow.
Our own father doth us feed.

It was all very deafening, and when the boys had finished their singing, the room seemed hot and stuffy. The grandfather mopped his perspiring face with a handkerchief, and Clim

thought he saw, besides the sweat, tears coursing down the old man's cheeks. They did not wait for the distribution of presents; Clim's head had begun to ache. On their way home he asked his grandfather: "Do they love the Czar?"

"Of course," his grandfather replied; but immediately added angrily, "Mint cookies are what they love." Then, after a short silence, "Eating is what they love."

Clim hated to think that his grandfather was a braggart, but the thought persisted nevertheless.

His grandmother, stout and pompous, in a rusty *capote* of cashmere, looked at everything through her gold lorgnettes, and spoke in a drawling, reproachful voice:

"We used to, in my house. . . ."

According to her, everything that had ever taken place in her house had been as remarkable, as splendid, as in a fairy tale. His grandfather openly skeptical, grumbled scornfully, parting his grey sidebeards with his dry fingers:

"You, Sophia Kyrillovna, evidently led a life such as is usually enjoyed only in paradise."

His grandmother's heavy nose would turn red from the snub, and she would slowly vanish from them like a cloud at sunset. She always had in her hand a French book with a green marker of silk; on the marker, embroidered in black, were the words "God knows; man merely surmises."

No one loved his grandmother. Clim, seeing this, concluded that it would not be a bad idea to say that he, and he only, loved the lonely old woman. He willingly listened to her stories about the mysterious house. On her birthday she took Clim for a stroll in one of the city streets, and in the depth of a large yard she pointed out to him an ungainly grey old structure with five windows, divided by three columns, with a crumbled porch and a mezzanine of two windows.

"There is my old home," she said.

The windows were boarded up; the yard was cluttered with half-broken barrels and bottle hampers, strewn with broken glass. A dog sat in the middle of the yard biting the burrs out of his tail. A little old man, as shaggy as the dog, was sitting on the steps of the porch chewing some bread and scallions. He might have come out of a drawing in the fairy tale, *The Fisherman and the Little Fish,* a story that now bored Clim.

Clim wanted to remind his grandmother that she had always described the house to him differently, but, having glanced at her, he asked:

"What are you crying about?"

His grandmother made no reply, wiping the tears from her eyes with a tiny handkerchief of hand-made lace.

Yes, everything wasn't as it had been recounted by the grown-ups. It seemed to Clim that this distinction was understood only by two people: himself and Tomilin, "a personality of unknown purpose," as Varavka had styled the teacher.

7

In Clim's eyes there was something mysterious about the teacher, who was small and angular, wore a little red beard split in two, and had long copper-coloured hair that hung to his shoulders. He seemed to observe everything very intently, but with a far-away look in his strange eyes, the pupils of which seemed to protrude from the milky whites. Tomilin walked about in a blue bubble of a blouse made of coarse material. He wore heavy *mouzhik* boots, and black trousers. His face reminded one of the icon of a saint. More curious than anything else though were his unpleasantly red and timorous hands.

In the early days of their acquaintance Clim had thought

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Tomilin half blind, with a strange aberration that made him see things always as larger or smaller than they actually were. It was for this reason, Clim thought, that the teacher touched everything so cautiously. It was downright funny to watch him!

Yet for all his apparently bad eyesight, the teacher wore no spectacles. He would read aloud from little lavender notebooks, turning their leaves indecisively, as though expecting the paper to flare up from under his hot, feverish fingers. It was his second year of tenancy in the Samghin household, and in that time he had changed no more than the samovar on the table.

After tea, when the maid Malasha was removing the dishes, his father would place two stearine candles in front of Tomilin. Everybody then took a seat around the table. Varavka would pucker up his face as if he had to take cod liver oil, and grumble:

"What — another reading of the most sage utterances of the illustrious Count?"

Then, hiding himself in a leather chair behind the grand piano, he would light a cigar, and through its smoke came the dull rumbling of his words:

"Puerility! The squire is carrying on!"

"A cerebral dreamer," mumbled the doctor, disapprovingly, as he sipped his beer.

The doctor was an unpleasant fellow who looked as if he had lain for so long in a cellar that he had become dank and overgrown with black mould. He was filled with spite against everyone. He evidently wasn't a clever fellow; he hadn't been able even to pick out a fair wife. She was small, evil tempered, and not good looking. She spoke rarely, sparingly, saying two or three words and then falling into a long silence, gazing off into a corner. No one would start a friendly argument with her, and in general she was treated as though she didn't even exist. At times it seemed to Clim that she was purposely ignored because

she was feared. Her voice, which had a break in it, always alarmed Clim. When she spoke, he always expected this sharp-nosed woman to say something unusual, as she had heretofore.

Once Varavka suddenly became angry, slammed the lid of the grand piano with his heavy palm, and exclaimed in the tones of a deacon:

"Nonsense! Every reasoned action of a man will inevitably be a coercion over a fellow-man, or over his own self."

Clim expected that Varavka would add "Amen!" but he did not have a chance to say anything because the doctor started grumbling:

"The Count is being naïve; he has never read his Darwin."

"Darwin is a devil," said his wife loudly; the doctor ducked his head as if someone had struck at him, and blurted softly:

"Balaam's she-ass!"

Maria Romanovna was loudly upbraiding Varavka, but above her angry shouting Clim heard the stubborn voice of the doctor's wife:

"He taught that evil is the law of life!"

"Enough, Anna," commanded the doctor. Meanwhile, Clim's father had begun to dispute with the teacher about some hypothesis or other concerning Malthus. Varavka got up and went away, trailing a ribbon of cigar smoke behind him.

Varavka was the one adult most interesting and comprehensible to Clim. He did not hide the fact that he liked to play solitaire much more than he liked listening to the reading. Clim felt that his father also would rather play cards, but his father never confessed it. Varavka could speak so well that his words passed into one's memory like silver five-kopeck pieces into a toy savings bank. When Clim asked him what a hypothesis was, he immediately answered:

"It's a little dog they hunt truth with."

He was the jolliest of all the grown-ups, and bestowed funny nicknames upon everybody.

Clim would be sent to bed before they began to read or play Preference, but the boy always resisted stubbornly and begged:

"I'll sit only a little while longer, a teeny little while longer!"

"My! How he likes the society of the grown-ups!" His father would pretend amazement. After these words Clim went up to his room peacefully, knowing that he had accomplished his desire—had made the grown-ups pay attention to him again.

Sometimes his father would request:

"I say, recite the *Meditation,* beginning with the line:

Thou whose envy doth deem as worth while. . . ."

Clim would extend his right hand in the air, his left caught in the belt of his breeches, and recite, frowning:

A life drunken with flattery's guile,
With libertinage, gluttony, gaming—
Awaken! . . . .

Varavka laughed till he cried; Clim's mother smiled reluctantly; while Maria Romanovna announced prophetically in a low voice:

"He will be an upright man."

Clim saw that the grown-ups were constantly raising him above the other children, which was a pleasant thing. But already on rare occasions he felt that the attention of the grown-ups was something of a hindrance to him.

There were hours when he wanted to, and could, play with just as much self-oblivion as the tousled, hump-nosed Boris Varavka, or Boris' sister, or his own brother Dmitri, and the albino-

hued daughters of Dr. Somov. Like these others, Clim became intoxicated from the excitement, and would lose himself in their games. But the minute he noticed that one of the grown-ups was watching him he would be sobered by the fear that his absorption in the game might reduce him to the ranks of ordinary children. It always seemed to him that the grown-ups were keeping him under observation and expecting from him exceptional utterances and actions.

At the same time he noticed that the children were beginning to dislike him more and more. They regarded him with curiosity, as one would a stranger, and, after the manner of the grown-ups, expected him to do magic stunts of some kind or other. Yet his wise little utterances and phrases aroused in them something of a mocking chillness, a distrust of him that amounted sometimes to hostility. Clim concluded that they envied his reputation — the reputation of a boy of exceptional abilities; but nevertheless this state of affairs hurt him, by turns irritating and saddening him. He tried to overcome the unfriendliness of his comrades, striving to accomplish this at the same time that he continued, all the more, to play the rôle which had been forced on him by the grown-ups. He attempted to command, to teach, but succeeded only in evoking angry rebuffs from Boris Varavka. This dexterous, boisterous boy frightened and even repulsed Clim by his imperious manner. In his projects there was always something dangerous, difficult. He compelled submission to himself, and in all games he assigned to himself the leading rôles. He hid in inaccessible places; he climbed, agile as a cat, over roofs and trees; bafflingly elusive, he never let himself be caught, and having brought the opposing players to such a state of exhaustion that they refused to play longer, he would taunt the vanquished:

"What — have you lost the game? Are you giving up? Oh, you quitters!"

It seemed to Clim that Boris never gave anything a thought, knowing instinctively what had to be done and exactly how to do it. Once, vexed by the tameness of his comrades, he voiced his dreams:

"This summer I'm going to get me some worth-while fighters, some of the boys in the asylums or the workshop where they make the icons, so I can have real battles. As for you fellows, I'll just drop you!"

Clim felt that the little Varavka girl disliked him more insistently and openly than the other children did. Lidia Varavka was very much to Clim's liking — a slender little girl, swarthy, with grey eyes and dishevelled black curly hair. She ran amazingly, springing lightly from the earth as though she did not even touch it. With the exception of her brother, none could either catch her or get ahead of her. Like her brother, she always chose the leading rôles for herself. When she hit herself against something, or scratched her leg or arm, or smashed her nose, she never cried, never whined, as the Somov girls did. But she was almost painfully sensitive to cold; she disliked darkness, even shade, and in bad weather became unbearably capricious.

In the winter she would fall asleep, like a fly. She sat in her room, rarely going out even for a stroll, and angrily complained against the God who caused her gratuitous grief by sending rain, wind, and snow upon the earth.

She spoke of God as though he were an old man, kind-hearted and well known to her, who lived somewhere nearby and who could do everything he wished, but most frequently did not do what he should.

"Why, there isn't any God at all," declared Clim. "It is only the old men and the old women who think that he exists."

"I am not an old woman, and Paula, too, is still young," calmly

replied Lidia. "Paula and I love him very much, but mamma is angry against him because he has unjustly punished her, and she says that God plays with men just as Boris plays with his toy soldiers."

Lidia portrayed her mother as a martyr: they seared her back with red-hot iron; they injected medicine under her skin, and tortured her in every way possible.

"Papa once had to go abroad, but she did not want him to. She is afraid that papa will perish without her. Of course, papa would not perish; but he does not argue with her; he says that the sick always think up frightfully silly things, because they are afraid to die."

With this girl Clim felt very much at his ease, and happy—as happy as when he listened to the fairy tales of his nurse, Eugenia. Clim comprehended that Lidia did not regard him as in any way remarkable, that in her eyes he was not growing up, but was just as he had been two years ago, when Varavka had taken the rooms. He was abashed and vexed, realizing that the girl was turning him back to childish and silly little things; but he could not convince her of his importance—a thing that would have been difficult if for no other reason than that Lidia was able to talk for an hour at a stretch without stopping, yet would never listen to him nor answer his questions.

Often of evenings, having become tired from play, she would grow quiet, and with her kindly eyes wide open would pace slowly through the yard, through the garden, as though seeking for something she had lost.

"Let's go and sit awhile," she would propose to Clim. In a corner of the yard, between the stable and the stone wall of a recently erected house of their neighbour's, there stood, dying for lack of sunlight, a great elm tree. Near its trunk were piled old boards and logs, and upon them, on a level with the roof of the

stable, there lay a little cart woven out of reeds, which belonged to Clim's grandfather.

Clim and Lidia would clamber up into this little cart and sit in it and converse. Often the little girl, chilled, would snuggle up to Samghin, and he experienced an especially languid pleasure in touching her sturdy warm body, in hearing her thoughtful, husky voice.

Her voice was poor, double-toned; it seemed to Clim that it ranged only between the consecutive musical tones *fa* and *sol*. And Clim thought, as did his mother, that the girl knew a great deal more than was necessary at her age.

"All that stuff about the stork and the head of cabbage is just poppycock," she would say. "They say that because they are ashamed of bearing children, but still our mammas do give birth to their babies, just as cats do; I have seen them, and Paula has told me about it, too. When my breasts get bigger, like mamma's and Paula's, I, too, shall give birth to a boy and a girl — such as you and I. To give birth is necessary, else there would always be the same people, and when they died, there would no longer be anybody left. Then both the cats and the hens would die, too — for who would feed them? Paula says that God forbids childbirth only to nuns and girls in high school."

Very often, and at great length, Lidia would tell about her mother and their maid, Paula, who was a jolly, rosy-cheeked roly-poly — and it was always something new she told him about them.

"Paula knows everything — even more than papa does. Sometimes — when papa has gone to Moscow — Paula and mamma sing very soft songs, and both of them cry, and Paula kisses mamma's hands. Mamma cries a lot whenever she drinks any Madeira. She is sick because she is evil tempered, and she doesn't like to have papa friendly with other women, and with your

mamma. She doesn't like any ladies—only Paula, and she, of course, isn't a lady, but a soldier's wife."

As she spoke she clenched her fingers into tight little fists and swayed her body, one tiny fist beating time on her knees. Her voice sounded ever softer, ever less animated; finally she was speaking as if she were in a dream, and her voice, then, made Clim sad.

"Before she fell ill mamma was a gypsy, and we have a picture of her in a red dress, with a guitar. I'm going to study for a little while in the *gymnasium,* and then I, too, shall take to singing with a guitar—only I shall wear a black dress."

At times Clim wanted to contradict the girl, to start a dispute with her, but he could not bring himself to do it, fearing that Lidia would grow angry. Finding her the most interesting of all the girls he knew, he was proud that Lidia treated him better than the other children did; and when Lidia in a sudden caprice proved untrue to him, inviting Luba Somov into the *tarantass,* Clim felt hurt, abandoned, and jealous to the verge of angry tears.

8

The Somov girls seemed to him quite as disagreeable as their father. They were born within a year of each other, and both were squat and stout, with round faces like tea saucers. The older of the two, Varya, differed from her sister in that she was constantly ailing, so that Clim did not have to see as much of her as of Lubov. Varavka had nicknamed the younger sister "the white mouse," and the children called her "Luba, the Clown." Her white face looked as if it were powdered with flour; her blueish-grey watery eyes hid behind the pink cushions of her swollen eyelids; her colourless eyebrows were practically invisible on her extremely bulging forehead; her hair lay on her scalp as though it

had been pasted on. She plaited it into a funny little braid, with a yellow ribbon tied to its tip. She was gay; but Clim suspected that the gaiety of this ugly and far from clever girl must be a pretense. She devised numerous things, always unsuccessfully. Once she invented a tiresome game, "What's going to happen to you?" Having cut some paper into little squares, she wrote something on each, rolled the squares into tight little tubes, and made each child take three tubes from her lap.

"Ring," "pealing," "wolf," Lidia read out her lots, whereupon Lubov announced in the senile, snuffling voice of an old fortune-teller:

"You, my dear young lady, will marry a priest, and will live in a village."

Lidia was furious: "You don't know how to tell fortunes! I can't tell fortunes either, but you are even worse at it than I."'

Clim's little tickets disclosed the words, "moon," "dream," "onion."

Luba the Clown squeezed the bits of paper in her fist, pondered a moment, biting her puffy lips, then cried out:

"In your sleep you will kiss the moon, burn yourself, and start to cry. All this will be in your sleep!"

"Nonsense! But it's well done!" Boris voiced his approval.

Of all Andersen's fairy tales, Luba found *The Shepherdess and the Chimney-Sweep* most pleasing. She would beg Lidia to read this story aloud, and as she listened she wept, unashamed. Boris Varavka then frowned and grumbled:

"Stop that sniffling! After all, it's a good thing they weren't smashed to bits."

Her strange grief about the china chimney-sweep, as well as everything else about this girl, seemed false to Clim. He dimly suspected that she was attempting to pass herself off as the same sort of original person that he, Clim Samghin, was. Late one eve-

ning Luba dashed, all excited, from the street into the yard where the children were playing noisily, came to an abrupt stop, and, raising her arms aloft, shouted toward the sky:

"Listen, listen!"

They all fell silent, scanning the blue heavens, but no one heard anything. Clim, rejoicing that one of Luba's tricks had not worked, began teasing her, stamping his foot:

"You didn't know how to fool them! You didn't fool anybody!"

But the little girl, having pushed him aside, puckered up her flour-white face in a great effort and began hurriedly:

Last night my pa put on his panama—
He looked just like a mushroom white;
I simply could not tell 'twas pa. . . .

She stopped, covered her eyes with her hand, and reproached Clim:

"It's you who mixed up everything!"

"He is forever shoving himself in front of everybody, like a blind man," said Boris sternly, and began suggesting rhymes: "Fright? Sight? Blight?"

Clim, seeing that everybody was displeased, experienced a still greater dislike for Luba and felt that it was harder for him to get along with children than with grown-ups.

Varya was more boring than her sister, and, like her, unattractive. She had blueish little veins on her temples. Her owlish eyes were gloomy, the movements of her languid body were clumsy. She spoke in a low careful drawl, but nevertheless her speech was so muddled that it was difficult to make out what she was talking about. Clim wondered why Boris paid such gallant attention to the Somov girls and ignored the handsome Alena Telepniva, who was his sister's chum.

On inclement days the children would gather in the Varavka apartment, in a large untidy room which could have served for a salon. There was an enormous sideboard in it, a harmonium, and an exceedingly wide divan upholstered in leather. In the middle of the room stood an oval table and ponderous high-backed chairs. The Varavkas had been living in these rooms for three years, yet one would have thought they had moved in only the day before, so badly arranged were the furnishings. There were not enough of them, either; the room seemed empty and unlivable.

The children played circus most often. The table served as the circus arena, while the stables were located underneath the table. Circus was Boris' favourite game; he was both ringmaster and horse-trainer. Their new playmate, Igor Turoboev, doubled in the rôles of acrobat and lion. Dmitri Samghin took the clown part. The Somov sisters and Alena were panther, hyena and lioness; while Lidia Varavka played the rôle of wild-animal trainer.

The animals fulfilled their duties honestly and seriously. Seizing Lidia by her skirt and legs, they did their best to knock her down and chew her up. Boris would shout desperately: "No squealing like suckling pigs! Lidia, hit them harder!" Usually the degrading duties of a hostler were thrust upon Clim; it was he who dragged out from under the table the horses and other animals. He suspected that this work was assigned him purposely to humiliate him. Altogether the game of circus was not to his liking; noisy and boisterous, like most of their other games, it soon became a bore. Refusing to play any longer, he would withdraw and join "the public" on the divan, where Paula and a Sister of Mercy were seated, while Boris would grumble:

"O you cry-baby! The devil take him! Paula, call Dronov!"

Seated on the divan, Clim would follow the game. But he

found the mother Varavka far more interesting than her children.

In a room brightly lit by a large hanging lamp, a black-haired woman with a big nose and enormous eyes in a dark face was lying on a wide bed, propped against a pile of pillows that was like a snowdrift. From a distance the shaggy head of the woman resembled a gnarled, charred, but still glowing root of a burned tree. Glaphira Isaevna incessantly smoked thick yellow cigarettes. The smoke poured thickly from her mouth and nostrils; even her eyes seemed to give forth smoke.

"Clim!" she would call, in a heavy voice. Clim was afraid of her. He approached her cautiously, and, having scraped his foot and bowed his head, took his stand two paces away from the bed, where the woman's dark hand could not reach him.

"Well, what's new in your place?" she would ask, thumping the pillows with her fist. "What is your mother doing? All gone to the theatre? Varavka is with them? Aha!"

This "Aha!" she pronounced threateningly, and the gimlet-like gaze of her black eyes repelled the boy.

"You are crafty," she would say. "It is not for naught that they praise you; you are crafty. No, I won't give Lidia in marriage to you."

In the big room Boris was shouting, stamping his feet:

"The orchestra! Come, mamma, the orchestra!" Glaphira Isaevna would take up a guitar, or another instrument that looked like a duck with its long neck hideously extended. The strings would ring dispairingly. Clim found this music malevolent, like everything else about Glaphira Isaevna. At times she would suddenly and maliciously burst into song, in a rich nasal voice. The words of her songs were strangely broken, their connection incomprehensible, and the sound of this ululation made everything in the room still more sombre and uncomfortable. The children,

clustered together on the divan, listened silently and submissively, but Lidia would whisper apologetically:

"She can do better, but today she isn't singing in her best voice."

Lidia would ask very gently: "You aren't in your best voice today, are you, mamma?"

Her mother's answer was indistinct, grumbling.

"There, you see," Lidia would say, "'she is not in her best voice."

Clim was afraid that if this woman were to get well she might do something frightful, but Dr. Somov reassured him. He had asked the doctor:

"Will Glaphira Isaevna be able to rise again soon?"

"Together with everybody, on the dreadful judgment day," Somov had answered carelessly. Clim believed every dire, gloomy word the doctor said.

When the children made too much noise stamping about overhead, Varavka, the father, would come up from the Samghins', and shout, standing in the doorway:

"Quieter, you wolves! It's impossible to live with so much noise going on. Vera Petrovna is afraid you will break through the ceiling."

"Board the ship!" Boris would command, and they would all throw themselves upon his father, climbing up on his back, hanging onto his shoulders and around his neck.

"Are you ready?" he would ask.

"All set!"

Varavka would first demand from the children their word of honour that they would not tickle him; then would start running at a trot around the table, stamping so that the dishes rang in the sideboard and the crystal pendants of the lamp gave forth a plaintive tinkle.

"Destroy him!" Boris would shout, and then began the great moment of the game. They tickled Varavka. He howled, squealed, laughed; his little sharp eyes popped out from fright. Snatching the children away from him one after the other, he would throw them on the divan, while they, jumping upon him anew, stuck their fingers in his ribs and under his knees. Clim never took part in this coarse and dangerous game. He stood aloof, laughing, and listened to the bass shouts of Glaphira: "That's the way to treat him! That's the way!"

"I surrender!" howled Varavka finally, and tumbled onto the divan, squashing his enemies. They obtained from him a ransom of pastry and candy. Then Lidia would comb his dishevelled hair and beard, and, wetting her finger, smooth down her father's shaggy eyebrows, while he, having laughed until he was exhausted, would puff ridiculously, mopping his sweating face with his handkerchief and piteously reproaching them:

"No, you are not honest folk at all."

After that he would go into his wife's room. She would hiss a greeting to him out of her twisted lips, while her black eyes, angrily widening, grew more fearsome. Varavka spoke reluctantly and in a low voice:

"What? No, those are merely ideas of yours. Stop it? All right. I'm not an old man yet."

The little word "ideas" was very comprehensible to Clim, and sharpened his inimicality toward the sick woman. Yes, of course, she was always thinking up something evil. Clim saw that Glaphira Isaevna was slovenly, not kind to her children, and frequently rude. Boris and Lidia seemed to interest her only when they were executing some dangerous gymastics, at the risk of breaking their arms and legs. At such times she regarded her children intently, as if she were taking aim at them, with her thick eyebrows contracted, her purple lips tightly set, her arms

crossed, and her fingers sunk into her bony shoulders. Clim felt convinced that were the children to fall, to hurt themselves, the mother would burst into joyous laughter.

Boris ran about in torn blouses, unkempt, unwashed. Lidia was worse dressed than the Somov girls, although her father was richer than the doctor. Clim, however, valued the friendship of the little girl more and more. He liked to keep silent as he listened to her endearing chatter — to keep silent, forgetting about his own obligation to say clever precocious things.

9

When Igor Turoboev, the dandy, appeared on the scene — beautifully dressed, as if he were a fashion-plate, unpleasantly polite, yet as dexterous and as lively as Boris — Lidia left Clim and took to following the new playmate about submissively, like a little dog. It was incomprehensible, the more so since from the very first day of their acquaintance Boris had quarrelled with Turoboev; within a few days they had a ferocious fight which culminated in tears and blood. Clim for the first time saw how furiously boys fight, as he observed their distorted faces, their malicious efforts to hit each other as painfully as possible. He listened to their squeals, their hard breathing; and it so amazed him that for several days after the fight he timorously kept aloof from them. The whole affair intensified his feeling that he, who could not fight, was an outsider. Igor and Boris soon became fast friends, although they were forever arguing and quarrelling. Each, stubbornly, without sparing himself, strove to demonstrate that he was more daring, more powerful, than his comrade. Boris conducted himself as though he had been burned; there was evinced in him something frenzied, as though he were in a hurry to finish the games and was afraid that he would not be able to.

When Turoboev came on the scene, Clim felt himself cast off still farther; he had been placed side by side with his brother Dmitri. But kind-hearted ungainly Dmitri was loved because he permitted himself to be ruled. He never argued or grew offended; patiently and unskillfully he played the most insignificant and unprofitable rôles. Dmitri was also loved because he could, unexpectedly and to Clim's envy, gain the children's attention by telling them about birds' nests, about animal lairs, about the life of the bees and the wasps. He would speak mysteriously, in a hushed voice, with a joyous smile on his broad face and in his kindly eyes.

Turoboev and Boris demanded that Clim submit to their will just as meekly as his brother; Clim would yield to them, but, in the middle of the game, would declare:

"I'm not playing any more," and leave abruptly.

He wanted to show that his submissiveness was only the condescension of a clever fellow; that he wanted to and could be superior to all sorts of follies. But no one could understand this, and Boris cried out boisterously:

"Go to the devil — we're tired of you!"

His freckled, sharp-nosed face was mottled, covered with red blotches, and his eyes sparkled angrily. Clim was afraid that Varavka would strike him.

Lidia eyed him askance and frowned; the Somov girls and Alena, beholding Lidia's treachery, winked at each other and whispered, and all this filled Clim's soul with a caustic sadness. The boy consoled himself with the surmise that he was not liked because he was cleverer than all of them, while following this consolation, like its shadow, pride sprang up, and a desire to criticise them; he found the games boresome, and asked:

"Isn't it possible to think up something more diverting?"

"Go ahead and think it up, but don't interfere with us," said Lidia angrily, and turned away from him.

"How rude she has become!" Clim reflected bitterly.

He invented a walk for himself which, so he imagined, must bestow importance on him. He walked without bending his legs, with his hands behind his back, like Tomilin, the teacher. He contemplated his comrades with his eyebrows puckered up.

"What are you so puffed up about?" Dmitri asked him. Clim smiled contemptuously without replying. He bore no love for his brother and thought him a little simpleton.

Turoboev, a chill, clean little fellow, and very polite, also contemplated Clim with his dark, unkindly eyes puckered up—contemplated him challengingly. His face, far too handsome, wrinkled in anger whenever Clim approached Lidia. But the little girl spoke to Clim carelessly, hastily, stamping her foot and looking in the direction of Igor. She was clinging more and more to Turoboev; they strolled about holding each other's hands. To Clim it seemed that, even when interested in a game, they were playing for each other and were not conscious of anybody else.

Whenever they played Blind Man's Buff and Lidia was "it," Igor purposely thrust himself into her groping hands.

"That's not right!" Clim would cry out, and everybody agreed: "No, it isn't right!" As for Turoboev, with his handsome eyebrows raised, he would protest convincingly:

"But, gentlemen, she is a weak little thing."

"No!" Lidia would become indignant. "No matter what you say, no, no!"

"I, too, am rather weak," Luba the Clown declared, offended; but Turoboev, already blindfolded, was running about in pursuit.

On one occasion Dmitri Samghin, escaping from Lidia's hands, had overturned a chair right in the way of her feet. The girl

struck her knee against a leg of the chair and emitted an " Oh! " Igor, turning pale, seized Dmitri by the throat:

" You fool! You're not playing fair."

When it was noticed that Ivan Dronov was attentively peeping under the skirts of the little girls, Turoboev demanded that Dronov should not be invited to play. Ivan Dronov insisted upon using the family name himself, and had compelled his grandmother to call herself Dronova. Bandy-legged, with his bulging stomach, his squeezed-in, flattened skull, his broad brow and large ears, he was markedly and yet attractively ugly. On his broad face, in the midst of which the little red knob of his nose was barely perceptible, glistened narrow little eyes, turbid and blue, very quick and greedy. Greediness was Dronov's most noticeable quality. With unusual greediness he would draw in the air through his moist little nose, as though he were stifling from lack of it. He ate gluttonously and with astounding rapidity, gulping loudly, smacking his thick, very red lips. He would say to Clim:

" I am a poor man. I need to eat a lot."

At the insistence of Grandfather Akim, Dronov, together with Clim, was preparing for the *gymnasium,* and during the lessons given by Tomilin, Dronov revealed a nervous haste; to Clim even this seemed greediness. When he asked the teacher a question, or was answering one, Dronov spoke very rapidly as if he were sucking in his words, as though they were hot and were scalding his lips and tongue. Several times Clim questioned this companion who had been thrust upon him by the grandfather:

" Why are you so greedy? "

Dronov wriggled his nose, squinted his small restless eyes to one side, and did not answer; but at an opportune moment, having strangely lowered his high-pitched, grating voice, he said:

" A hungry worm has been put inside me."

" Worm? " Clim questioned.

In a rapid whisper he informed Clim that his aunt, a witch, had bewitched him, having driven into his stomach a *cherv chrevak* (tape-worm), so that he, Dronov, was tortured all his life long with insatiable hunger. He said, too, that he was born in the year when his father had been warring with the Turks. His father had fallen into captivity, had adopted the Turkish faith, and now he was very well to do. His witch-aunt, having found out about this, had driven his mother and grandmother out of her house. His mother had very much wanted to go off to Turkey, but his grandmother had not let her.

Clim would not believe in the tape-worm; but as he listened to his mysterious whisper he beheld, with amazement, another boy before him. The flat face of his nurse's grandson was becoming handsome; his eyes did not shift about; in his pupils flared up a blueish fire of joy, incomprehensible to Clim. At supper Clim retold Dronov's story to his father, who was greatly amused.

"Do you hear that, Vera? What imagination eh? . . ."

His mother was not listening, as was frequently her way. Briefly and dryly she told Clim that Dronov had thought all this up: he had no witch-aunt; his father was dead — had been buried under a landslide while digging a well. His mother had worked in a match factory and had died when Dronov was four years old. After her death his grandmother had hired herself out as a nurse to Clim's brother Mitya; and that was all there was to it.

"Yes, Vera," said Clim's father, "but still, mind you. . . ."

Dmitri Samghin grinned broadly and said:

"Clim, too, is fond of lying."

His father turned to him:

"You have put it very rudely, Mitya. One must distinguish lying from fantasy."

At this point Varavka arrived, followed by grandfather Akim.

They launched into a dispute, and Clim again felt strongly his right and need to "think up" his own personality. At the same time his interest in Dronov increased — an interest akin to jealousy. The very next day he asked Ivan:

"Why did you spin all those lies about your aunt? You never had an aunt at all!"

Dronov glanced at him angrily, and, crossing his eyes, answered:

"As for you, don't go tattling around about what you don't understand. It's all on account of you that my grandma has torn my ears off, you tattle-tale!"

II

I

EVERY morning at nine o'clock Clim and Dronov would ascend to the mezzanine, to Tomilin, and until noon would sit in the little room which resembled a cubby-hole into which three chairs, a table, a metal washstand, a creaking wooden cot, and a multitude of books had been tossed in disorder. It was always hot in this room, with a stuffy odour of cats and pigeons' droppings prevailing over other smells. Through the half-open window one could see the tops of the trees in the garden, ornamented with hoar frost or snow, like pieces of absorbent cotton. Behind the trees the grey fire tower ascended. On top a man circled slowly and wearily, clad in a grey sheepskin jacket. Beyond the fire tower was the vast void of the heavens.

The teacher met the children with a silent, vague smile. No matter what time of the day it was, he always looked like a man who had just awakened. He would immediately lie down on the cot with his face turned to the ceiling; the cot gave forth a dismal creaking. Sinking his fingers into the red unkempt locks of his coarse and stringy hair, his copper-coloured little beard pointing up to the ceiling, without looking at his pupils, he would put questions to them, discoursing in a quiet voice, using easy words. But Dronov found that the teacher was speaking "as if he were lying under a stove."

Sometimes, most often during the hour of the history lesson, Tomilin would get up and pace the room — seven paces from the table to the door, and then back again. He walked with his head

bowed, gazing at the floor. He shuffled his trodden-down slippers and kept his hands behind his back, his fingers clasped so tightly that they turned a deep red.

Tomilin taught Dronov more willingly and zealously than he taught Clim, it seemed to the latter.

"And so, Vanya, what was it that Alexander Nevski[6] did?" he would ask, closing the door and straightening the skirts of his blouse. Dronov would answer, quickly and distinctly:

"The Holy, Most Christian Prince, Alexander Nevsky, had summoned the Tartars, and with their aid fell upon the Russians. . . ."

"Wait now — What are you saying? Where did you get that?" His teacher was astounded. His shaggy brows stirred and his mouth gaped ludicrously.

"That's what you said."

"I? When was that?"

"Thursday."

The teacher was silent for a while, smoothing his hair with his palms; then, pacing toward the table, said severely:

"It isn't necessary to remember that."

He had a habit of talking to himself. Often, if he was speaking of history, he would sink into thought for a minute or two, then, begin again, very low and incomprehensibly. At such times Dronov would nudge Clim with his foot, and indicating the teacher with a wink of his left eye, which was more restless than his right, would smile with a wry little sneer. Dronov had the lips of a fish: blunt, harsh, like cartilages. After the lesson Clim would ask him:

"Why were you nudging me?"

"He, he!" Dronov would splutter, "He spins a lot of taradiddles about Nevsky. A saint wouldn't make friends of the Tartars — you can't fool me about that! That's why he told me not to re-

member, 'cause he made up a lie. Fine teacher he is! He teaches you, then tells you not to remember! "

When he spoke about Tomilin, Ivan Dronov always let his voice sink, carefully looking about him and giggling; while Clim, listening to him, felt that Ivan enjoyed disliking the teacher.

" Whom do you think he is speaking with? 'Tis the devil he speaks with."

" There are no devils," sternly declared Clim. Dronov looked contemptuously into his eyes, spat over his own left shoulder, but did not bother to argue.

Keeping a jealous eye on him, Samghin saw that Dronov was striving to get ahead of him in scholastic success, and that he was easily doing it, too. He saw that this lively lad hated all the grown-ups, that he took the same sort of delight in hating them as he did in disliking the teacher. He would bring to the verge of tears his stout, exceedingly kind-hearted grandmother, whose solicitude for him almost bordered on frenzy; he would put ashes or pepper into her snuff box, unravel the stitches of the stockings she knit, bend her knitting needles, throw her ball of wool to the kittens, or smear the wool with butter or glue. The old woman would beat him, and after having beaten him, would make the sign of the cross in the corner before the icon, imploring with tears:

" Mother of God, forgive me, for Christ's sake, for the hurt done an orphan! "

Then, having thrust a piece of cake or candy upon her grandson, she would say with a sigh:

" Here, Dronov, eat that, you simpleton! Why must you torment me? "

" Your father's a funny fellow," Dronov would say to Clim. " A real father, now, is something to be afraid of — ugh! "

In front of Vera Petrovna, Dronov fawned like a kindly little

lap-dog. Clim noticed that the nurse's grandson feared her as much as he feared Grandfather Akim, and that Varavka was especially awe-inspiring to him.

" A most huge devil," he would call the engineer, and would tell stories about him: Varavka had in the beginning been a freight carrier; after that a horse thief; that was how he had gotten rich. This story amazed, dumbfounded, Clim. He knew that Varavka was the son of a landowner; he had been born in Kishenev; had studied in Petersburg and Vienna. After that he had come to this town, and had been living here now for seven years. When he had indignantly told this to Dronov, the latter, shaking his head, muttered:

" There is a Vienna — the chairs come from there. As for Kishenev — perhaps that's only in a geography book."

Not infrequently Clim sensed that he was becoming stupid because of Dronov's strange actions and his palpably coarse lying. At times it seemed to him that Dronov was lying for the sole purpose of making sport of him. Dronov disliked his playmates no less than he disliked the grown-ups; especially after the children had refused to play with him. In games he revealed many crafty ideas; but he was cowardly and rude to the girls — to Lidia especially. He contemptuously called her a gypsy. He pinched her and tried to knock her off her feet.

Whenever the children played in the yard, Ivan Dronov, spurned by them, would sit on the steps of the kitchen porch. With his elbows propped on his knees, his head resting on his hands, and his eyes veiled over with a mist, he followed the games of the little children of the gentry. He let out a joyous squeal whenever someone fell down or whimpered with pain from a blow.

" Crush him! " he would encourage, whenever he saw Varavka wrestling with Turoboev. " Give him the back heel! "

If they were playing in the garden, Dronov would stand near the wicket gate, leaning against it with his stomach, his face thrust in between the bars, occasionally crying out:

"Grab her! There she is—hiding behind the cherry tree. Run up on her from the left. . . ."

He tried in every way to hinder the players; he purposely walked slowly through the yard, looking at the ground.

"I have lost a copek," he complained, waddling on his bandy legs, taking care to stumble against the players. They flew upon him, knocking him off his feet. Then Dronov, sitting on the ground, would whimper and threaten:

"I'm going to tell on you!"

For two or three weeks Luba Somov was very chummy with Dronov. They strolled together, hid in the corners, and held mysterious and animated discussions. But one evening Luba, in tears, came to Lidia, crying wrathfully:

"Dronov is a fool!"

Throwing herself into a corner of the divan, covering her face with her hands, she repeated:

"Oh, what a fool he is!"

Without saying a word, Lidia, turning scarlet, ran into the kitchen. When she returned she proclaimed victoriously and ferociously:

"He got what was coming to him!"

Three days afterward Dronov was still walking about with a large lump on his forehead and another under his left eye.

Yes, Ivan Dronov was an unpleasant, even a detestable, boy. But Clim, seeing that his father, his grandfather, and his teacher were waxing rapturous over Ivan's abilities, knew he was a rival. He was jealous of him, he envied him, he was grieved. Nevertheless Dronov attracted him, and often Clim's unkind feelings toward him would disappear in a flare-up of interest and sympathy.

There were days when Dronov would suddenly blossom out and become unlike himself. Overcome with pensiveness, he would draw himself up, and in a soft voice tell Clim astounding things, half dreams, half fairy-tales. He would tell how from the well in a corner of the yard there had crawled an enormous man, but light and as transparent as a shadow, who had stepped over the gates going down to the street, and that when he had passed the belfry it had grown darker and had swayed to the right and left, like a slender tree under the buffeting of the wind.

" And not so long ago, before the rising of the moon, a most enormous black bird was flying across the sky. It would fly up to a star and pluck it off; it would fly up to another, and pluck it off also. I wasn't sleeping. I was sitting on the window sill. Then I grew frightened and lay down in the bed and pulled the blanket over my head. And, do you know, I felt so sorry for the stars; tomorrow, thought I, the sky will be empty. . . ."

" You are thinking it all up! " said Clim.

Dronov did not contradict him. Clim understood that Dronov was inventing these things, but he spoke of his visions so convincingly that Clim felt a desire to accept his lie as the truth. Finally, Clim could not decide how, exactly, he should treat this boy, who with every passing day was more strongly attracting and repelling him.

2

Dronov brilliantly passed his entrance examinations for the *gymnasium*. Clim failed. This affected him so much that when he reached home he laid his head in his mother's lap and burst into sobs.

His mother caressingly pacified him; she spoke to him lovingly, even praised him:

" You are ambitious. That is a good thing."

In the evening she had a quarrel with his father. Clim heard her angry words:

"It is time you understood that the child is not a plaything! . . ."

Several days later the boy felt that his mother had become more attentive, more kindly. She even asked him:

"Do you love me?"

"Yes," said Clim.

"Very much?"

"Yes," he repeated with conviction, snuggling his head close to her soft and fragrant bosom. His mother said sternly:

"You must love me very much."

Clim could not remember — Had mamma asked him about this before? He could not have answered this question to himself with as much assurance as he had answered her. Of all the grown-ups his mother was the hardest to understand. There was almost nothing one could think about her; it was like a blank page in a book. Everyone in the house meekly obeyed her, even the patriarch Akim and stubborn Maria Romanovna.

Clim's mother smiled rarely and said but little. She had a stern face, pensive blueish eyes, thick dark eyebrows, a long sharp nose, and little pink ears. She plaited her golden hair in a long braid and arranged it on her head in three coils. This made her very tall — much taller than Clim's father. Her hands were always hot. It was perfectly clear that she liked Varavka more than any other man. She spoke with him more readily and smiled to him oftener than to anyone else. Their acquaintances remarked that she had become extraordinarily pretty of late.

His father had also changed, imperceptibly but considerably, had become even more bustling. He plucked his little dark moustache, a thing he had not been in the habit of doing before. His dovelike eyes blinked as if they were dazzled, and their gaze was

as pensive as if he had forgotten something and could not remember it. He had become still more loquacious, and his voice was higher-pitched. He talked about books, about steamers, about forests and fires, about the stupid governor and the soul of the people, about revolutionaries who had bitterly erred, about that amazing fellow Gleb Uspenski, who "sees everything through and through."[7] He was forever speaking of something new, as though he were afraid that on the morrow someone would forbid him to speak.

"Amazing!" he would cry out, "Remarkable!"

"You are certainly a masterhand at being amazed, Ivan!" Varavka would say, stroking his magnificent great beard.

Varavka had taken his wife abroad. He had packed Boris off to an exceptional school in Moscow, where Turoboev had studied. A large-eyed old woman with a grey moustache had come from somewhere for Lidia and had carried the girl off into the Crimea, to take the grape cure. Varavka returned from abroad rejuvenated, still more mockingly gay. He had grown more buoyant. As he walked he stamped his feet still more, and frequently stopped before a mirror to admire his beard, now cut in such a manner that it looked even more like a fox's tail. He had even begun to speak in rhymes. Clim had heard him saying to his mother:

"When from delusion's murk uncouth
Through one warm word of firmest truth
My fallen soul I did draw. . . .

Of course, at that time I was an idiot!"

"That is hardly so, and very rude, Timophei Stepanovich," Clim's mother had said. Varavka emitted a whistle, just like an urchin; then said slowly:

"There is no such thing as a tender truth."

Almost every evening he quarrelled with Maria Romanovna. Presently Vera Petrovna began to dispute with her, too. Then the midwife, rising to her feet and straightening up to her full height, admonished, frowning sternly:

"Vera, you're mad! Come to your senses!"

Clim's father would run up to her, distressed, and shout:

"Doesn't England prove that compromise is a necessary condition of civilization? . . . ."

The midwife would say sternly:

"Stop it, Ivan!"

Whereupon his father would turn to Varavka:

"You must agree, Timophei, that at a certain moment evolution demands a decisive stroke. . . ."

Varavka thrust him away with his short powerful arm, and shouted, smiling:

"No, Maria Romanovna, no!"

His father went to the table to drink beer with Dr. Somov, where the half-intoxicated doctor was mumbling:

"Nadson is right: 'The fires are dead. . . .' How does it go?"[8]

"'The petals are shed,'" added his father, commiseratingly nodding his baldish head. He drank his beer pensively, kept silent, and was unnoticed.

Maria Romanovna seemed also to have grown suddenly grey. She had lost flesh; she was stooped; her voice had become lower, until it sounded muffled, broken, no longer imperious as it once was. Always clad in black, her figure made one feel melancholy. On sunny days when she walked through the yard or strolled in the garden with a book in her hands her shadow seemed heavy, more dense than the shadows of other people; her shadow dragged after her like a continuation of her skirt, and seemed to make the flowers and grass lose their brightness.

The final upshot of the disputes with Maria Romanovna was that one morning she walked out of the courtyard following a cart filled with her things. She went away without bidding anyone farewell, walking majestically, as always; holding in one hand her bag of instruments while with the other she pressed to her flat breast a black, green-eyed tomcat.

Having grown used to observing the grown-ups closely, Clim knew that something disquieting and incomprehensible had sprung up among them; it was as if they were all sitting on chairs to which they were not accustomed. The teacher had also changed. As always, he looked upon everybody with the strange eyes of a man who had just been waked up; but now he looked hurt, gloomy; his lips trembled as if he wanted to cry out but did not have the courage to do so. As for Clim's mother, the teacher looked at her in the same way that Grandfather Akim scrutinized a counterfeit ten-rouble bill which someone had managed to palm off on him. He began addressing her disrespectfully. On entering the parlour one evening when mamma was getting ready to play the piano, Clim heard Tomilin say in a rude voice:

" That's not true; I saw how he. . . ."

" What is it you want, Clim? " his mother asked quickly. The teacher hid his hands behind his back, and went away without even glancing at his pupil.

One night, a few days later, getting out of his bed in order to close the window, Clim saw the teacher and his mother walking in the garden. Mamma was brushing the midges away with the end of a blue scarf. The teacher, tossing his copper-coloured hair, was smoking. The light of the moon was so brilliant that even the smoke of the cigarette was tinted gold. Clim wanted to cry out: " Mamma, I'm not sleeping yet." But suddenly Tomilin, having stumbled against something, fell on one knee, lifted

up his arms, shook them as though he were threatening, and embraced his mother's legs. She swayed, pushed away his shaggy head, and rapidly walked away, tearing her scarf as she went. The teacher heavily shifted from his knees to his heels. Getting up, he thrust his fingers in his coarse hair, smoothing it, and rushed off after mamma, waving his arm. Then Clim, frightened, called out:

"Mamma!"

She lifted her head and went toward the house, skirting the teacher as though he were a lamp-post. She came to Clim's bedside, her face unusually stern, so stern that it was almost like a stranger's face, and angrily began to reproach him:

"Here you are, not asleep, though it is already twelve; yet in the morning there's no waking you. Now you will have to get up earlier. Stepan Andreivich will no longer be living with us."

"Because he was embracing your legs?" asked Clim.

Wiping her face with her scarf, his mother began speaking, no longer angrily, but in that assured voice in which she explained difficult notes when she gave Clim music lessons.

She said that the teacher had taken a caterpillar off her skirt; that was all. As for embracing her legs, why of course not—that would have been ungentlemanly.

"Ah, my little boy, my little boy! You are forever imagining things," she said with a sigh.

Not wishing her to see that he did not believe her, Clim closed his eyes. From his reading and from the conversations of grown-ups he already knew that a man goes down on his knees before a woman only when he is in love with her. It was not at all necessary to get down on one's knees for the purpose of picking a caterpillar off a skirt.

His mother was gently caressing his face with her hot hand. He did not broach the subject of the teacher again. He simply re-

marked that Varavka did not like the teacher either. He felt his mother's hand give a jerk, pressing his head heavily into the pillow. When she had gone away he thought as he fell asleep how strange all this was! The grown-ups pretended that he was inventing when he was speaking the truth.

3

Tomilin went to live in a small narrow lane, a blind alley which was stopped up with a little blue house. Over the porch of the house was a sign:

COOK AND CANDY-MAKER
ORDERS TAKEN FOR WEDDINGS, BALLS, AND WAKES

Tomilin settled down in a wing of the chef's house, as he had in Samghin's. The room was light and clean at first, but in a few days it was littered with piles of books until it looked as if he had brought along to his new lodgings all the dust, stuffiness, even the creaking of the floor boards, of his former quarters. Under the teacher's eyes blueish swellings came. The golden sparkles in his pupils were dimmed, and he had become pitifully ragged. During lesson time he no longer got up from his unmade bed.

"My legs hurt me," he explained.

"He must have hurt his knees that time in the garden," thought Clim.

Tomilin gave his lessons impatiently; there was irritation in his low voice. At times, having closed his weary eyes, he would be silent for a long while, then suddenly ask, vacantly:

"Well, did you understand that?"

"No."

"Think a while."

Clim did think — but not of past participles, or the source of the river Amu-Dariya, but of the reason for his dislike for this man.

Why did the clever Varavka always speak of him jeeringly and offensively? Clim's father, his grandfather Akim, all their acquaintances except Tanya, avoided Tomilin as though he were a chimney-sweep. Only on rare occasions Tanya alone would ask:

"You, Tomilin — what do you think?"

He would answer her briefly and carelessly. He thought differently from other people, and his words took on an insistent tone whenever he spoke with Varavka.

"In substance," he would say.

"'In substance, in substance!'" Varavka mimicked him. "The devil take this substance of yours! Far more important is the fact that Karl the Great issued laws about poultry-keeping and trading in eggs."

The teacher retorted as if he were reading from a book:

"For the purpose of liberty, the vices of a despot are far less dangerous than his virtues."

"Fanaticism!" Varavka shouted, while Tanya began rejoicing:

"Ah, no, this is amazingly true! I am going to write it down!"

She wrote down these words on the cover of one of Clim's notebooks, but forgot to transcribe them, and they were burned up in a rubbish heap before she had learned them by heart. It was Varavka who used to say:

"Come, now, Tanya, search a bit in the dump of your memory."

There was a great deal which Clim had to think about, and this necessity was becoming ever more difficult. Everything around him was expanding, increasing, and crowding into his soul as stubbornly and rudely as pilgrims crowded into the Church of

the Assumption, which housed a miracle-working icon of the Mother of God. Only recently the things to which his eyes had grown accustomed had been standing in their places without arousing any interest. But now there was something about them which attracted his attention, while others, once interesting and beloved to him, had lost their fascination. Even the house itself was expanding. Clim felt sure that there was nothing in it which was unfamiliar to him, yet suddenly he would discover something which he had never noticed before. In a half-dark corridor, something that previously was only a black patch over a wardrobe now evolved into a portrait of a grey-haired old woman with pensive eyes. In the attic, in an old chest bound with wrought iron, he discovered a multiplicity of things, interesting even though they were broken: frames for portraits, figurines of porcelain, a flute, an enormous book written in French and full of pictures of Chinamen, a thick album with portraits of people with their hair curiously and badly dressed. The face of one of them was all criss-crossed with a blue pencil.

"These are the heroes of the great French Revolution; this gentleman is Count Mirabeau," explained the teacher. Half-smiling, he inquired: "You found it among the discarded things, you say?" and turning the leaves of the album, he repeated thoughtfully:

"Yes, yes — it is the past; the unnecessary past."

Clim discovered in the house a whole room stuffed almost to the ceiling with broken furniture and curious discarded things whose former use already appeared incomprehensible, mysterious. It was as if all these dusty things had suddenly run into the room in a throng — frightened by a fire, perhaps — and in their hurry had piled one on the other, breaking, smashing, shattering one another, and had died there. It was sad to see this chaos. One felt sorry for the broken things.

4

Early one morning near the end of August, Luba the Clown appeared, unwashed and unkempt. Stamping her feet, sobbing, catching her breath, she wailed:

"Come quick — Mamma has lost her mind," and falling on her knees before the divan, she buried her head under a pillow.

Clim's mother left immediately. Presently the little girl withdrew her head from the pillow and began telling her story to Clim, looking at him pitifully with her wet eyes as she sat on the floor.

"Yesterday, when they were shouting at one another, I saw that she had gone out of her mind. Why couldn't it have been papa? He is always drunk anyway!"

Jumping to her feet, she seized Clim by his sleeve.

"Let's go!"

Clim could not recall how he had managed to run up to the Somovs' apartment, drawn along by Luba. In the half-dark bedchamber — the shutters of the windows were closed — Sophia Nikolaevna was twisting convulsively on the bed which was all rumpled. Her legs and arms were tied up with towels. She was lying with her face to the ceiling, jerking her shoulders, bending her knees, striking her head against the pillow, and screaming "No! No!"

Her eyes, bulging frightfully, had widened to the size of a five-copek coin. They were fixed upon the flame of the lamp and were red, like hot embers. Under one eye was a scratch. Blood was flowing from it.

"No!" the doctor's wife gasped in a muffled voice.

And then, more loudly:

"No, no!"

Her convulsions were becoming more powerful; her voice was

increasingly malignant and harsh. The doctor was standing at the head of her bed, leaning against the wall. He was biting his black bristly beard. He was indecently unbuttoned, and dishevelled; his trousers were held up by a single suspender; the other he had wound around his left hand and kept jerking upward so that his trousers, too, jumped upward. His legs were trembling like a drunkard's, while his confused eyes blinked so constantly that it seemed as if his underlids were rattling, like his wife's teeth. He kept silent, as though his mouth had become permanently sealed by his beard.

Another doctor, old man Williamson, was sitting at a table. His eyes puckered up as he gazed at the flame of a candle and carefully wrote something. Vera Petrovna was stirring some murky water in a glass. A maid was running about with a piece of ice on a platter and a hammer in her hand.

Suddenly the sick woman bent herself into an arch, and swinging her arms, fell from the bed to the floor, striking her head. She began crawling along, moving her body like a lizard, and crying out in triumph:

"Aha! No, no!"

"Hold her—are you asleep?" Clim's mother shouted. The doctor dragged himself away from the wall, lifted his wife and laid her on the bed, then sat down on her legs.

"Let's have some more towels," he ordered.

His wife, struggling to rise, struck his cheek-bone with her head. He leapt off the bed, and she again tumbled to the floor and began untying her legs, gasping and mumbling incoherently.

Clim was hiding in a nook between the door and a closet. Varya Somov, standing behind him with her chin resting on his shoulder, was whispering:

"This will pass, won't it? It will pass—yes?"

Luba was running past them with towels, frightened and squealing:

"O Lord! O Lord! . . ."

Suddenly stamping her feet, she turned to her sister:

"Varya, how about tea?"

Clim's mother turned in the direction of the noise and cried out sternly:

"Children, get out!"

She ordered them to run along to Tanya Kulikova. All the acquaintances of this young girl made her an active participator in their dramas.

The children hurried off to the edge of the town. Clim, still frightened, was walking behind the sisters, keeping an oppressed silence, when he heard the elder Somov girl reproach her sister:

"Mother has lost her mind, but you are yelling for tea!"

"Keep quiet, you turkey-hen."

"You're greedy and shameless!"

"And you — Are you a saint?"

Halting for a moment, Luba whispered to Clim:

"I don't want to go with her. Let's go for a stroll."

Clim, bereft of any will of his own, went off by her side. After a few paces he asked:

"Do you love your mamma?"

Luba bent down, picked up a yellow poplar leaf, and with a sigh said:

"Well — I don't know. Perhaps I have never yet loved anybody."

Wiping her swollen lids with the dusty leaf, stumbling along as though she were blind, she continued:

"Father complains that loving is a difficult matter. He used to shout at mamma: 'Understand this, you fool — I love you! Don't you understand?'"

"What's that?" asked Clim, but Luba seemed not to hear him.

"Why, they have been married fourteen years. . . ."

Considering that Luba was talking nonsense, Clim ceased listening to her, but she still went on talking, wearisomely, like a grown-up, swinging a spray of birch leaves she had picked up from the curb. They came unexpectedly onto the river bank and sat down on some old logs. Presently Luba noticed that she had soiled her dress on the dirty logs. Annoyed, she made her way across the logs to a boat which was tied to them, and seated herself in its stern. Clim followed her. For a long while they sat in silence. Contemplating in the water the distorted reflection of her face, Luba struck it with a branch, waited until it flowed together again in the greenish water, struck it once more, and turned away.

"What an ugly girl—of course I am ugly?"

Receiving no reply, she asked:

"Why are you silent?"

"I don't feel like talking."

"You don't want to say that I am ugly?"

"No, I don't feel like talking about anything at all."

"You are simply ashamed to tell the truth," declared Luba, "but I know that I am a monster; and besides, I have a vile temper. Both papa and mamma say that. I ought to become a nun. I don't want to sit here any more."

She jumped up, ran rapidly over the logs, and vanished. Clim sat on for a long time in the stern of the boat, gazing into the slow-moving water. He was oppressed by ennui, a feeling he had never experienced before. He desired nothing, but surmised, through his boredom, that it was not a good thing to be like the people he knew.

5

When he came home his mother met him with an alarmed exclamation:

"Lord, how you frightened me!"

Clim thought at first that her words were not addressed to him but to the Lord.

"Weren't you afraid?" his mother asked him. "You should not have gone there. What was the use?"

"What did they do with her?" Clim asked.

His mother told him that the Somovs had quarrelled, that the doctor's wife had had a bad nervous attack, and that they had been compelled to send her off to a hospital.

"It isn't dangerous. Both of them are sickly; they have had to suffer a great deal. They have grown prematurely old."

According to her, it seemed that the doctor and his wife were broken people. Clim recalled the room packed with broken, useless things.

"It isn't dangerous," his mother repeated.

But Clim for some reason had not believed her, and his skepticism proved to have been well-founded. Twelve days later the doctor's wife died; Dronov told Clim, in secret, that she had jumped out of a window and had been killed by the fall. During the morning of the day of the funeral, Clim's father arrived. He made a speech over the grave of the doctor's wife, and wept. All their acquaintances wept except Varavka, who stood at one side smoking a cigar and exchanging pleasantries with the beggars.

Dr. Somov went from the churchyard to the Samghins', where he soon became drunk and shouted:

"I loved her, but she hated me. She lived only so she could make things miserable for me!"

Clim's father garrulously consoled the doctor, who, raising his black and hairy fist to the level of his ear, shook it while he wept drunken tears and babbled:

"For fifteen years I lived with this creature without having a single thought in common with her, and I loved her — loved her, see? And still I love her. But she hated everything that I read, thought, did!"

Clim heard Varavka saying in a low voice to his mother:

"Look you! What he has imagined!"

"There is a grain of truth in it," answered his mother, in just as low a voice.

The doctor was led off to sleep in the wing where Tomilin had lived. Varavka held him under the armpits and pushed him from the back with his head, while Clim's father preceded them with a lit candle. But a moment later he ran back into the dining-room, brandishing the empty candlestick, having lost the candle, and called to his wife in a low shaking voice:

"Vera, come here — Grandmother is feeling ill!"

They found her dead. Sitting on the kitchen porch, she had been feeding the chickens, when suddenly, without even a cry, she had fallen down dead. It was not so terrible, only very strange, to see her large, wide-hipped body pressed to the earth, her head turned to one side. One ear crumpled under her head seemed to be listening to the earth. Clim gazed at her blue cheek, at her staring, solemn eye, and, without feeling any fright, wondered. It seemed to him that his grandmother had become so accustomed to living with a book in her hands, with a smile of disdain on her stout dignified face, with her unfailing love for chicken broth — that she could have gone on forever without disturbing anybody.

When the body, like a bag of old clothes, had been carried into the house, Ivan Dronov said:

"She died appropriately," and he pointed to his grandmother: "There's an example for you, nurse!"

The nurse was the only person who shed tears over the grave of the departed. After the funeral, during dinner, Ivan Akimovich Samghin made a short and grateful speech about people who knew how to live without interfering with their fellow-creatures. Akim Vassilievich Samghin, after some reflection, remarked:

"It seems time now for me to be going to my forefathers."

"He doesn't seem to be any too sure about that," Varavka whispered into Vera Petrovna's rosy ear. Clim's mother's face was not sorrowful, but unusually kind; her stern eyes were soft. Clim was sitting by her side. He heard the whisper and saw that his grandmother's death had not grieved anyone. For him it had even proved convenient: his mother had given him grandmother's cozy room with windows that overlooked the garden, with its oven of milky white tiles in one corner. This was very pleasant, because sharing a room with his brother had become rather a nuisance.

Dmitri studied late, interfering with one's sleep, and recently the unceremonious Dronov had taken to visiting him, and they would frequently mutter and stir about until almost midnight. Dronov was tightly buttoned up in a long uniform which came below his knees. He had grown thinner, drawn in at his belly. With his closely cropped hair he resembled a dwarf soldier. When he spoke to Clim he threw open the skirts of his uniform coat, shoved his hands into his pockets, spread his legs wide apart, and turning up the rosy little button of his nose, inquired:

"What are you about, Samghin, studying so poorly? Why, I am already the third pupil in my class!"

Squaring his shoulders, wagging his elbows, he would say with self-assurance:

"You'll see! I'll be a better man than Lomonossov."[9]

Grandfather Akim contrived, despite opposition, to have Clim taken into the *gymnasium*. The boy held that his entrance had been opposed by all the teachers, that they discriminated against him in the examination and the re-examination, and he was already prejudiced against the school. On one of the very first days after Clim had donned the uniform of a *gymnazist,* Varavka, having thumbed through the schoolbooks, threw them aside:

"They are just as stupid as the books we learned from."

After that he recounted at length and amusingly stories of the stupidity and malignancy of his teachers; Clim particularly remembered his comparison of a *gymnasium* with a match factory.

"The children, like little sticks of wood, are smeared over with a substance which is easily inflammable and which burns up rapidly. The result is the poorest sort of matches. Not all of them burst into flame, and most of them are far from capable of igniting anything."

Clim was preceded by his reputation of being a boy of exceptional capabilities. This reputation aroused the sharp and mistrustful attention of the teachers and the curiosity of the pupils, who expected to see in their new comrade something in the nature of a little conjuror. Clim immediately felt himself in the familiar yet oppressive position of one compelled to live up to what was expected of him. He was becoming accustomed to this rôle, evidently as inescapable for him as the morning splash in cold water, doses of cod liver oil, soup for dinner, and the annoyance of cleaning his teeth at night.

The instinct of self-defence prompted him to certain rules of conduct. He recalled what Varavka had said to his father:

"Don't forget, Ivan, that when a man says little he has the appearance of being wise."

Clim decided to talk as little as possible and to hold himself aloof from the mad horde of cruel little monsters. Their annoy-

ing curiosity was pitiless, and during his first days at the school Clim pictured himself as a captured bird whose feathers were being plucked before its neck was wrung. He felt in danger of losing himself among these boys, who were all alike, almost indistinguishable. They were sucking him in; they were striving to make him an imperceptible unit of their mass.

So, frightened by them, he hid himself under his cloak of boredom, enveloping himself in it as in a cloud. He developed a staid walk, like Tomilin, with his hands behind his back, and the air of one occupied with serious matters and indifferent to pranks and boisterous games. From time to time life helped to plunge him into serious thought. In the middle of September, on a rainy night, Dr. Somov shot himself on his wife's grave.

His artificial pensiveness proved very useful to him. The boys soon left him in peace, and to the teachers it accounted for his inattentiveness during lessons — that is, to all the teachers with the exception of one, a little old man with a moustache like a Chinaman's, who taught Russian grammar and geography. The boys dubbed him "Half-Baked" because his left ear was smaller than his right, although so slightly that even when the deformity was pointed out to Clim he was not immediately convinced of the disproportion of the teacher's ears. The boy felt from the very first lessons that the old man had no faith in him, that he wanted to trip him up, make him a laughing-stock. After calling on Clim the old teacher would adjust his moustache, compress his purple lips as though he was about to whistle, and inspect Clim silently over his spectacles for several seconds. Finally he would ask kindly:

"And so, Samghin, the Lake Region is noted for a plentifullness of what?"

"Of fish."

"Yes? Perhaps there are forests there?"

"Yes, there are."

"And what do you say; do the fishes sit in the trees, now?"

The class burst into laughter. The teacher smiled, showing his dark, gold-filled teeth.

"Well now, my most genial chap, why have you prepared your lesson so badly, eh?"

Returning to his form, Clim saw rows of round, closely cropped heads, their teeth bared in grins, their eyes of different colours sparkling with laughter. He was hurt to the verge of tears.

The boys admitted that "Half-Baked" taught very entertainingly. Clim found him stupid and malicious; he was becoming convinced that it was more boresome and difficult to study in the *gymnasium* than it had been at Tomilin's.

"How is it you're not playing?" Ivan Dronov, glowing with heat, sparkling and happy, would pounce upon Clim during recess. Dronov was one of the best students in his class, and also one of the best mischief-makers in the whole *gymnasium*. It was as if he were rushing to make up for all the games of which he had been deprived by Turoboev and Boris Varavka. On his way home from the *gymnasium* with Clim and Dmitri he would whistle to himself and make fun of the brothers Samghin. Not infrequently he asked Clim:

"Are you going to Tomilin's today? I'll go along with you."

When they reached the red-haired teacher's room Dronov would fasten himself upon him, snowing him under with questions on theology, the most tiresome subject for Clim. Tomilin, smiling, heard his questions to the end, answering them cautiously. When Dronov had gone, he would ask Clim, in the words of Glaphira Varavka:

"Well, what's the news at home?"

He asked this as though he expected to hear something unusual.

He was becoming more and more submerged by books; in the corner at the foot of his cot the heap had piled up almost to the ceiling. Stretching himself out on the cot, he instructed Clim:

"The noble metals are styled those which hardly ever, or never, become oxidized. Do you mark that, Clim? Noble people, who are steadfast in spirit, also do not become oxidized; that is, they do not yield to the blows of fate, to misfortune. . . ."

These informal supplements to his instruction were more to the boy's liking than his school work, and stayed longer in his memory. As for Tomilin, he was rather generous with such homilies. He talked as though he were reading something written on the ceiling, which was criss-crossed with a network of cracks and covered with dirty yellow paper.

"A compound substance upon being heated loses part of its weight; the simple substance preserves or increases its weight."

After a silence, he added:

"Here, for instance, are you, too sophisticated for your age. Your brother is more of a child, even though he is older than you."

"But Dmitri is foolish," Clim reminded him.

As always, with a mechanical calm, the teacher replied:

"Yes, he is foolish, but that belongs to his age. For every age there is a corresponding dose of stupidity and of brains. What is called complexity in chemistry is completely legitimate; while that which is taken for complexity in the character of a man is frequently only his imagination, his play: for instance, women."

He fell silent once more as though he had fallen asleep with his eyes open. Clim had a side view of the glistening white of his eye; it reminded him of dead Dr. Somov's staring eye. He realised that, in discoursing on the imagination, the teacher was conversing with himself, having forgotten his pupil. Often Clim expected to hear the teacher at any moment say something about

his mother, of how he had embraced her legs in the garden. But the teacher would say:

"To be useful, a conception is best put in the form of a question, of a conjecture: 'Perhaps this is so?' Beforehand it is honestly admitted that it may not be so. Harmful conceptions always take the form of an affirmation: 'This is precisely so and not otherwise.' Hence illusions and errors and, in general. . . . Yes."

Clim listened to these speeches attentively and tried hard to stamp them on his memory. He felt gratitude toward the teacher: a man who did not resemble anybody else, who was not liked by anybody, was speaking with him as with a grown-up and an equal. This was very useful. Memorizing the unusual phrases of the teacher, Clim repeated them as his own, and in this way fortified his reputation as a clever fellow.

At times, though, the red-haired man frightened him. Forgetting the presence of his pupil, he would talk so much, so long, and so incomprehensibly that Clim was obliged to cough, to strike his heel against the floor, or to drop a book in order to remind the teacher of his presence.

But even such noises did not always awaken Tomilin. Sometimes he continued to speak, his face grown stony, his bulging eyes wide and strained, until Clim expected at any moment to hear him shriek out "No, no!" like the doctor's wife:

It was particularly uncanny when the teacher while he was speaking would raise his right hand to the level of his face and pluck in the air at something invisible, going through the same movements as the chef, Vlass, when he plucked wood-hens.

At such moments Clim would interrupt loudly:

"It is getting late."

Tomilin, casting a glance at the murk outside the window, would agree:

"Yes—that will be all for today."

He would extend to his pupil his hairy fingers, the nails of which were like black crescents. The boy took his departure, pondering more on the teacher's personality than on his teachings.

6

Of winter evenings it was pleasant to stride over the crunching snow, imagining how at home, around the tea table, his father and mother would be impressed by new examples of their son's mentality. The lamp-lighter with his ladder on his shoulder was already running lightly from lamp-post to lamp-post, filling the blue air with yellow fires. In the winter stillness the lamp-globes rang out pleasantly. Cab horses trotted by, shaking their shaggy heads. At the crossing of the streets stood a snow-covered policeman, following with his grey eyes the small but pompous schoolboy, who, without hurrying, was crossing from one corner to the other.

Now, although Clim passed the greater part of the day outside the house, so that a great deal escaped his eyes, which usually observed so much, yet he sensed an atmosphere more and more disquieting in the house; his people seemed to be walking differently; the doors slammed more loudly.

His grandfather, as he painfully shifted his legs, which had become like petrified things, thrust his stick fiercely against the floor. He coughed so violently that his ears quivered, while his face and neck took on the hue of a ripe plum. But through the coughing he would protest angrily to Clim's mother, beating the floor with his stick for greater emphasis:

"Taking advantage of his gentle character, madam — taking advantage of the child-like trustfulness of Ivan, you, madam . . ."

Clim's mother warned him in a low voice:

"Do not speak so loudly; there is someone in the dining-room."

"I am obliged to tell you, Vera Petrovna. . . ."

"If you please — I am listening to you."

Clim's mother went to the door into the dining-room, and shut it tight.

Clim's father more and more frequently took journeys into the forest, to the factory, or to Moscow. He had become absent-minded and no longer brought Clim presents. He had grown much balder, so that his forehead seemed bigger. It pressed down on his eyes which protruded more than ever. The dark-blueness of them had faded to a dreary tint. He walked now with a funny hop, holding his hands in his pockets and whistling waltzes. Clim's mother more and more frequently treated him as a guest who had become a bore, but who did not realize that it was time for him to leave. She was dressing more pretentiously, more gaily; her bearing had become more proud, she had grown stronger and had filled out. Although she smiled as rarely as ever, she was gentler, and spoke more softly. Clim was amazed and hurt to see that his father's affection was passing from him to Dmitri. He and Dmitri seemed to be having some sort of secret between them.

One hot summer evening Clim came upon the father and son in an arbour of the garden. His father, laughing a strange hic-coughing sort of laugh, was sitting beside Dmitri, clasping the latter closely to him. Dmitri was in tears. When Clim came up he immediately jumped up and went away, while the father, brushing some tear-drops from his trousers with his handkerchief, said to Clim:

"He is upset."

"What is he crying about?"

"He? Oh, about the Dekabrists.[10] He has just read Nekrassov's *Russian Women*. Right after he had finished I told him about the Dekabrists. Well, he was upset."

Having answered briefly and reluctantly Clim's questions about the Dekabrists, his father jumped up and walked away, whistling. Clim, filled with a jealous desire to check up on his father's words, went immediately to his brother's room. He found Dmitri hunched up on the window-sill clasping his legs, his chin resting on his knees. He was mumbling to himself, and did not hear his brother enter. When Clim asked him for Nekrassov's book, Dmitri said he did not have it, but that his father had promised to give it to him.

"Were you crying about *Russian Women?*" Clim asked him. Dmitri stared at him in amazement.

"What?"

"What were you crying about?"

"Oh, go to the devil!" cried Dmitri plaintively, and jumped off the window-sill into the garden. Dmitri had grown a great deal. He was taller, thinner. Upon his once round, fat face angular cheek-bones were revealed. He frequently fell into deep thought, and at such times he moved his jaws unpleasantly, like Grandfather Akim. He looked at grown-ups mistrustfully from under his brows. As homely as ever, he had become more adroit, more buoyant, but a coarse strain in his nature began to show itself. He had become very friendly with Luba Somov, had taught her to race on ice skates and willingly submitted to her caprices. When Dronov offended Luba in some way, Dmitri with calm cruelty pulled Dronov's hair nearly out of his scalp. He paid no attention to his brother Clim, as formerly Clim had not noticed him; while his mother he regarded aggrievedly, as though he had been punished by her for no reason.

7

The Somov sisters lived at Varavka's, in charge of Tanya Kulikova. Varavka himself had gone off to Petersburg on business connected with a railroad, and from there he was to go abroad to bury his wife. Almost every evening Clim would go upstairs, and he always found his brother there, playing with the girls. When they tired of playing, the girls would take seats on the divan and command Dmitri to tell them stories.

"Something funny," Luba would request.

He would sit on an arm of the divan, lean against the wall, and spin yarns about teachers and schoolboys until the girls laughed uproariously. Sometimes Clim would contradict him:

"It wasn't like that!"

"All right, it wasn't like that," Dmitri would concur apathetically, and it seemed to Clim that even when his brother related things precisely as they had occurred, he still did not believe what he was telling. He knew endless foolish and funny anecdotes, but he told them without laughing, somehow as if he were ashamed. In general there had appeared in him a preoccupation Clim couldn't understand, and he regarded people in the streets with such searching scrutiny that he seemed to be finding it necessary to fathom every one of the sixty thousand inhabitants of the city.

Dmitri had a thick notebook, bound in black oilcloth, in which he jotted down things of interest and pasted newspaper clippings dealing with amusing trifles, *bon mots,* and short verses. These he read to the girls, but always hesitantly, mistrustingly.

"'In the cemetery of the city of Odoev one's attention is attracted by the following epitaph on the monument of a merchant's wife, one Polikarpova:

Her demise came without her spouse, and without her son;
There, in Krapivna, thundered the ball
No one knew of this at all.
They got the telegram that she was dead,
And all then from the wedding sped.
Here Olga, wife and mother, doth lay,
And whatever could we say
That would make her soul to shine?
May the Kingdom of Heaven be thine.'"

"How silly!" Lidia exclaimed scornfully.

"But then, it's funny," said Luba. "There is nothing better than something funny."

Over the broad face of her sister there slowly spread an indolent smile.

At times Vera Petrovna looked in on them and inquired in a bored voice, "Playing?"

Jumping down from the divan, Lidia would curtsey before her with exaggerated politeness. The Somov girls caressed her noisily. Dmitri kept a confused silence and tried clumsily to hide his notebook, but Vera Petrovna would ask him:

"Have you written anything new? Read it."

Dmitri read, covering his face with the notebook:

A policeman is standing by the blue sea's strand
But the blue sea is noisy to beat the band;
And malice gnaws him from sole to crown
For he cannot make the blue sea pipe down.

"Strike that out," his mother commanded majestically and passed on out of the room. Clim saw Lidia Varavka's spiteful glance follow her. Several times before he had wanted to ask the girl "Why don't you love my mamma?"

But he could not find the resolution to do this, even when, after Turoboev's departure, Lidia became friendly to him again.

8

Once Clim came home later than usual from his lesson at Tomilin's. Evening tea was already over. It was dark in the dining-room, and the whole house was so unusually quiet that the boy, taking off his coat, paused in the dimly lit entrance, to listen uneasily.

"Stop! I think someone has come!" he heard his mother whisper. There was a sound of feet scraping heavily over the floor, followed by the familiar click of the little copper door of the tiled oven closing. Then silence reigned once more, egging one on to listen more intently. His mother's whisper astonished Clim. She never addressed anyone but his father so familiarly, yet his father had left yesterday for the lumber mill. The boy moved cautiously to the door of the dining-room. His ears caught the sighs of soft, tired words:

"God, how insatiable, how impatient you are. . . ."

Clim peered carefully around the door into the room. In front of the oven's square maw filled with glowing embers, in his mother's favourite low armchair Varavka sprawled, embracing his mother's waist, while she sat on his knees, swaying to and fro, like a little girl. In Varavka's bearded face, illuminated by the light of the embers, was something fearful. His little eyes, so like the embers, sparkled strangely. Clim saw that his mother's pale hair was loosed. It cascaded in beautiful golden streams down her back.

"Ah, *you!*" she sighed softly.

Their attitudes so confused and agitated Clim that he staggered back, stepping on his overshoe; it sprang up and slapped against the floor.

"Who is there?" his mother cried out angrily and came swiftly to the doorway.

"You? Did you pass through the kitchen? Why are you so late? Are you frozen? Do you want tea?"

She spoke rapidly, kindly, at the same time scraping her feet noisily and making the door creak by opening and shutting it. Then she gripped Clim firmly by the shoulder, pushed him into the dining-room, and lit a candle. Clim looked around; there was no one in the dining-room. He glanced through the doorway into the adjacent room. It was pitch dark.

"What are you looking for?" asked his mother, giving a quick glance into his face. Clim hesitatingly replied:

"It seemed to me someone was here."

His mother, raising her eyebrows in surprise, looked around the room.

"Well, who could it have been? Your father isn't here. Lidia and Dmitri and the Somov girls are at the skating-ground. Timophei Stepanovich is in his room — perhaps you heard him?"

Upstairs there were heavy footsteps. His mother sat down at the table before the samovar, felt its side with her fingers and poured a cup of tea for him. Then, adjusting her magnificent hair, she continued:

"I was sitting here before the oven and became lost in thought. Did you come in just this minute?"

"Yes," lied Clim, realizing that at this point it was necessary to lie.

Playing with the sugar tongs, his mother fell silent, smiling slightly, gazing fixedly at the timorous flame of the candle reflected on the brass of the samovar. Presently she tossed aside the tongs, adjusted the lace collar of her *capote,* and began to talk. Her voice was unnecessarily loud: Varavka was buying grandmother's estate from her; he wanted to build a big house. "He

has evidently just come in, nevertheless I'll go and speak to him about it."

She kissed Clim's forehead and went away. The boy got up, walked over to the oven, brushed some ashes off the armchair, and sat down in it.

"Mamma would like to change her husband, only she is still ashamed," he mused, staring at the transparent blue flames that blazed up and died on the red embers. He had often heard of wives who left their husbands for other men, and of husbands deserting their wives. For some time Varavka had been more to his liking than his own father. But it was awkward and sad to know that mamma, such a serious, dignified person, who was respected and feared by all, was telling lies — and telling them so clumsily! Feeling the necessity of consoling himself, he repeated: "She is still ashamed." This was the only explanation he could find. But suddenly his memory reminded him of the scene with Tomilin. He drifted into a fruitless brown study as he pondered about this scene, and soon fell asleep.

9

The events in the house, distracting though they were, did not hinder Clim's progress in his school work as much as did his worry about the *gymnasium* itself, where he seemed unable to find a place worthy of him. In his class were three groups of boys: half a score who both studied and conducted themselves exemplarily; a clique of irrepressible mischief-makers, among them certain ones, like Dronov, who were also excellent students; a few poor little boys, frightened and timid, failures who were the sport of the entire class. Dronov frequently warned Clim against associating with this last group:

"Don't get too friendly with those boys. They're all cowards,

cry-babies, tattle-tales. That one red-haired little fellow, he's a little sheeny. That other queer one — the cockeye — will soon be expelled; he's poor and can't pay. This Jew fellow's older brother stole overshoes, and now he's doing time in a convict colony. As for that other polecat — he's a bastard, you know."

Clim studied assiduously, but his anomalous position in school was unaltered. Mischievous pranks he deemed beneath his dignity — besides, he did not know how to be mischievous. For a time he had a desire to ally himself with the shunned group, but among them he knew he was even more out of place than in the daring company of Dronov's comrades. He felt himself more intelligent than the other boys in his class; already he had read not a few books that were beyond his classmates' comprehension. Many of the boys even older than himself he thought more childish. When he tried to discuss with them the books he had read they listened to him mistrustfully, without interest; much of what he said they obviously didn't comprehend. At times he himself could not understand why an interesting book he had read lost in his re-telling all that he had found pleasing.

One day the illegitimate, a morose urchin with large cheekbones, whose family name was Inokov, asked Clim:

"Have you read *Eevanhoeh?*"

"*Ivanhoe,*" corrected Clim. "It was written by Scott — Walter Scott."

"You fool," said Inokov contemptuously, "why are you forever correcting everybody?"

And with a wry smile he forewarned him:

"Watch out, when you grow up you'll be a teacher."

The other boys laughed. They respected Inokov; he was two grades above them but made friends with them, and bore the nickname of "Fiery Eye." Then, again, he may have frightened them with his gloominess, with his sharp and steady gaze.

Spoiled by the attention paid to him at home, Clim felt keenly the teachers' contemptuous indifference. Some of them were also physically repulsive to him. The instructor in mathematics suffered from chronic catarrh. He sneezed deafeningly, spraying the pupils nearest him, and after sneezing he blew his nose long and vehemently till it made a whistling sound, puckering up his left eye the while. The history teacher entered his classroom carefully, like a purblind man. He stole up to the forms, always with the sour expression of one about to slap the cheeks of all the pupils within reach, and invariably began:

"*N-nu-us* . . . (well now . . .)," drawling out the syllables in his shrill, high-pitched voice.

He was nicknamed Gnuss (a contraction of *gnussavii,* "snuffling fellow").

In almost every teacher Clim saw an antagonistic attitude; all these slovenly persons in their threadbare frock uniforms eyed him disapprovingly as if he had somehow offended them. And although he became aware that the teachers bore themselves so strangely not only toward him but toward almost all the others, their grim faces distressed him nevertheless. They reminded him of the squeamish face his mother had once made when a drunken fishmonger overturned his creel of lobsters and the dirty little fellows, rustling crisply, crawled over the kitchen floor in all directions.

During the spring term Clim noticed a change in some of the teachers. Xaverii Rzhiga, head of the department of ancient languages, and later several other teachers as well, had begun to treat him more gently. This change was preceded by a startling episode. One day during the period of the main recess one of the boys hurled two large stones through the window of the head instructor's study, smashing the panes and a certain rare bloom

on the window-sill. The guilty one was sought zealously but could not be found.

Four days later Clim asked the omniscient Dronov who had broken the window.

"What do you want to know for?" inquired Dronov, suspiciously.

They were standing at the turn of the corridor, around a corner, and Clim suddenly beheld the shadow of the shaggy head of the chief instructor slowly creeping over the white wall. Dronov was standing with his back to the shadow.

"Don't you know?"

"You don't know, either!" Clim began to tease his comrade, "and yet you're forever boasting about knowing everything!"

The shadow stopped moving.

"Of course I know. It was Inokov," Dronov retorted, stung by Clim's taunts.

"He ought to confess to it honourably, because others are suffering on account of him," said Clim didactically.

Dronov winked at him and spat on the floor.

"If he confesses he'll be expelled."

The bell for the next class began an insistent jangle.

The next day, on their way home, Dronov proclaimed:

"Do you know, someone has betrayed him!"

"Whom?" asked Clim.

"Whom, whom! — What are you mooning about! Inokov, of course!"

"Oh — I had forgotten."

"Right after class yesterday they pounced down on him. They'll chase him out. If we could only find out who snitched on him — the dirty skunk!"

Clim had quite forgotten his conversation of the day before with Dronov; but now, comprehending that it was he

himself who had betrayed Inokov, he fell into frightened meditation: Why had he done this? After reflection, he decided that the caricature-like shadow of the chief instructor's head had suggested a way to revenge himself on the boastful Dronov.

"It's you who are guilty! You blabbed about it!" he asserted angrily.

"When was it I blabbed?" Dronov snarled back.

"What about during recess—to me?"

"But you couldn't have told on him; you didn't have time. Inokov was called up right after class!"

They halted opposite each other, like cocks ready to fight. But Clim sensed that he ought not to quarrel with Dronov.

"Perhaps they overheard us," he suggested, and Dronov answered amicably:

"There wasn't anybody around. It must have been somebody in the same class with Inokov who peached on him."

They walked on in silence. Feeling his guilt, Clim reflected on how he might make amends for it; but failing to find a solution, he became firmer in his desire to do something unpleasant to Dronov.

10

That same spring Clim's mother ceased to torture him with music lessons, and began playing assiduously herself. Of evenings there would arrive, with his violin, the red-faced, bald-headed advocate, Makov, a solemn fellow who wore dark eye-glasses. After him, on a creaky fly, came Xaverii Rzhiga with his violincello. He was spare, bandy-legged, with the peering eyes of an owl in his bony, beardless face. Above his yellow temples two grey tufts reared up, like horns. When he played his tongue lolled out over his flabby hairless lip, revealing two gold teeth in his

upper jaw. He spoke solemnly in the high voice of a church deacon, but Clim could never be certain whether he was speaking seriously or whether he was jesting.

"I always say that pupils would get along much better if they had no parents living. I say that because orphans are submissive," he would declare, shaking his index finger close to his blueish nose. Once he placed his dry hand on Clim's head, and, turning to Vera Petrovna, declared:

"Your son has a chivalrous and honest heart — that's so!"

To Clim himself he proclaimed:

"In order to fathom the sciences one must observe, juxtapose, and then reveal the inner heart of the veritable."

Observe — that, at least, Clim could do unusually well. He found it necessary to discover his comrades' faults, and became disquieted if he did not find them. But occasions for disquiet arose but rarely. He had worked out an exact measure: everything that was displeasing to him, or aroused a feeling of envy — all that was bad. He had already learned, not only to observe closely any pupil who was funny and silly, but also deftly to bring the shortcomings of one to the notice of another. When Boris Varavka and Turoboev arrived for their vacation, Clim was the first to suspect that Boris must have done something very bad and that he was afraid someone would find out about it. He had grown thinner, and blueish shadows lay under his eyes. His gaze had become distracted, uneasy. Though indefatigable as before in games and ingenious as ever in playing pranks, he now became unreasonably annoyed at every slight provocation. At such times small red blotches blazed up on his freckled face; his eyes glittered evilly; and when he forced himself to smile, he bared his teeth as if he were about to bite. In this headlong, irrepressible activity of his Clim sensed something dangerous, and avoided any games with him. He felt, too, that Igor and Lidia knew Boris' secret. The

three of them frequently hid away from the others to hold whispered consultation.

One evening, immediately after the postman had brought the mail, Clim heard a window in Varavka's study fly open with a crash. An angry shout rang out:

"Boris, come here!"

Boris and Lidia, sitting on the kitchen porch, were weaving a net out of ropes. Igor was whittling a trident out of a wooden shovel. They were preparing to stage a combat of gladiators. Boris arose, adjusted the skirt of his blouse, pulled in his belt, and quickly made the sign of the cross on his head and breast.

"I am going with you," said Turoboev.

"And I?" questioned Lidia, but her brother lightly pushed her away:

"Don't you dare!"

The boys went into the house. Lidia threw aside the ropes she was weaving and raised her head, listening. It had rained that afternoon, and upon the light-flooded leafage in the garden multicoloured drops sparkled gayly in the rays of the sunset. Lidia began to cry, brushing the tears from her cheeks with one finger. Her lips quivered; her puckered up face was pitiful. Clim watched her as he sat on the window-sill of his room. Overhead sounded the ferocious shouting of Boris' father:

"You lie!"

Clim shivered; but the son answered with a shout just as piercing:

"No! He's a scoundrel!"

Then came the sound of Igor's voice, calm as ever:

"Permit me—I'll tell you all about it."

The window above closed with a bang. Lidia got up and wandered through the garden, striking the branches of the shrubbery to make showers of raindrops fall on her head and face.

" What has Boris done? " Clim asked her.

It was not the first time he had asked her about this. Lidia still gave him no answer; she glanced at him coolly, as at a stranger. He suddenly had a desire to jump down into the garden and box her ears. Now that Igor had returned, she was once more ignoring Clim's existence.

Following the scene between father and son, both Varavka and Clim's mother began to humour Boris, paying as much attention to him as if he had just passed through a dangerous illness or had performed some heroic deed. This attention irritated Clim and intrigued Dronov, creating in the house an unpleasant atmosphere of curiosity and secretiveness.

" The devil! " muttered Dronov, scratching his nose with his finger; " I would give a silver coin to find out just what mess he has been in. Ugh, I have no love for this laddie! "

One night Clim, snuggling up to his mother, asked her what had happened to Boris.

" He has been very much wronged," she answered.

" In what way? "

" It is not necessary for you to know."

Clim glanced at her stern face and became silent. He realized that his ancient animosity to Boris was increasing.

Once he came upon Boris weeping in a corner behind the barn, his face hidden in his hands. He cried inaudibly, yet so that he swayed from side to side, and his shoulders shook like those of Varya Somov, who wept often as she went about in silence, like a shadow of her boisterous sister. Clim wanted to go up to Boris, but could not bring himself to do so. It was not pleasant to see Boris cry, but it was useful to find out that the rôle of one wronged was after all not as enviable as it seemed.

II

Suddenly one day the house became deserted. Varavka packed off his children, Turoboev, and the Somovs, in charge of Tanya Kulikova, for a steamer excursion on the Volga. Clim, of course, was invited to go with the other children, but he staidly asked:

"And how am I going to prepare myself for the next examination?"

He had put this question merely in order to impress them with his serious attitude toward his school work. But to his chagrin his mother and Varavka for some reason hastened to agree that it was unwise for him to go away. Varavka, taking him by the chin, praised his eagerness to study:

"Good boy! But don't be too abashed because you don't learn easily. All the talented people were poor scholars."

The children went off gaily, but Clim wept through most of the following night because of the wrong done him. For a month he lived with himself alone, as one before a mirror. Dronov left the house early every morning to play in the street, where he was the imperious leader of a gang of urchins. He took them bathing with him, led them to the forest after mushrooms, directed them in raids on orchards and truck gardens. People began coming to the house to complain noisily to the nurse about him; but she, grown completely deaf and slowly dying on her cot in the little half-dark room behind the kitchen, listened listlessly to the complaints. She rolled her head upon the greasy pillow and muttered vague promises:

"There, there! The Lord sees everything. The Lord will punish everybody."

Often the complainants demanded to see the mistress. Austere and erect, Vera Petrovna would come out onto the porch and listen in silence to their confused lamentations.

"Very well, I shall punish him," she promised them.

But she never did so. Only once did Clim hear her call from a window into the courtyard:

"Ivan, if you keep on stealing cucumbers you will be driven out of school."

Clim saw less and less of his mother and Varavka, and at times these two seemed even to be avoiding each other, as in a game of hide-and-seek. Often Clim heard questions addressed to him, or to Malasha, the maid:

"Do you know where your mother is? In the garden?"

"Has Timophei Stepanovich come in?"

The mother and son always smiled to one another when they met, but his mother's smile seemed unreal to Clim, even unpleasant, although her eyes, grown darker in colour, were more beautiful than ever. As for Varavka, day by day his ponderous fleshy lip seemed to protrude more greedily from his beard. Another thing that added to Clim's discomfort was the fact that his mother recently had taken to scenting herself too copiously. She used such strong perfumes that when Clim kissed her hands at bedtime the strong scent went up his nostrils like the smell of horseradish, making his eyes water.

Of evenings, if there was no music, Varavka would walk arm in arm with Clim's mother through the dining-room or the parlour, growling into his beard. His mother would smile.

But when there was music, Varavka settled himself in the armchair behind the piano, lit his cigar, and through the narrow slits of his half-shut eyes scrutinized Vera Petrovna through the smoke. He sat silent, motionless, seeming to doze.

"Everything all right?" Vera Petrovna would ask him, smiling.

"Yes," he answered softly, as though afraid of wakening somebody. "Yes."

Once he remarked:

"This is the most beautiful thing — inasmuch as this is always love."

"Ah, but no," retorted Rzhiga, "not always," and raising high the hand with the bow, he went on about music until the advocate Makov interrupted him:

"Well, but my wife — peace be to her ashes — did not like music."

He sighed, and grumbled in a low voice:

"I never can understand a woman who does not like music, when even hens and female quail . . ."

"Have you been a widower long?" Clim's mother interrupted him.

"Nine years. I was married just seventeen months — Yes."

Then he took up his violin again and began to play.

Listening intently to the conversations of the grown-ups about husbands, wives, domestic life, Clim noted in the tone of these conversations something vague, occasionally guilty, even mocking, as though the speakers were aware of grievous mistakes, remembering things which should not have been done. Gazing at his mother, he would ask himself, Would she, too, speak that way?

"No, she would not," he always decided, smiling to himself.

In one of his mother's kindly moments Clim asked her:

"Is it an affair you are having with him?"

"Oh, Lord, it is too early for you to think about such things!" said his mother, agitated and angry. She wiped her scarlet lips with her handkerchief and added in a softer tone:

"You see — he is alone, and so am I. We feel bored. Are you never bored?"

"No!" said Clim.

But he was bored. His mother paid so little attention to him that Clim took to hiding away before breakfast, dinner, and tea.

He felt less lonely when he heard the maid running through the yard calling to him.

"Where do you disappear to?" wonderingly, sometimes worriedly, his mother would ask him. Clim would answer:

"I was lost in thought."

"What about?"

"About everything. About lessons, too."

12

Tomilin's lessons were becoming more and more boring, less comprehensible, and he was growing unnaturally fat. He had changed from his usual costume to a white shirt with an embroidered collar, and upon his bare copper-coloured feet glistened green morocco slippers.

When Clim asked him for explanation of some difficult point, Tomilin, without anger but with evident wonder, would halt in the middle of the room and always say practically the same thing:

"Do understand this before all else: the basic aim of every science is to establish firmly a series of the simplest, most easily grasped and comforting truths. There!"

Tapping on his chin with his fingers and looking up at the ceiling till the whites of his eyes showed, he continued monotonously:

"One such truth is Darwin's theory of the struggle for existence —Do you remember? I was telling you and Dronov about Darwin. His theory establishes the unavoidable nature of evil and enmity on earth. This, brother, is man's most successful attempt to vindicate himself completely. Yes. Do you remember the wife of Dr. Somov? She hated Darwin insanely. Perhaps it is simply hatred, elevated to insanity, which creates an all-embracing truth."

When he stood up, Tomilin always spoke less coherently, more wordily, irritatingly. Clim, however, did not listen very attentively. He had a preoccupation of his own: he wanted to meet the children so that they should see at once that he was no longer the same as when they had left him. He pondered long on what must be done about this, and decided that he could overwhelm them much more effectively if he were to start wearing glasses. He told his mother that his eyes grew tired and that in the *gymnasium* he had been advised to buy coloured glasses to save his eyes. On the very next day he appeared with smoke-tinted spectacles astride his sharp nose. Through these glasses everything on earth seemed covered with a faint layer of greyish dust; even the air, without losing its transparency, became grey. His mirror convinced Clim that the glasses had made his slender face impressive, and even more intelligent. But as soon as the children returned, Boris, gripping Clim's hand, held him forcibly while he mocked:

"Look everybody! Here is a monkey in its old age!"

Luba Somov added her taunt: "Oh, what a little owl you have become!"

Turoboev was smiling politely, but his smile was offensive. Yet more offensive was Lidia's indifference. Placing her hand on Igor's shoulder, she looked past Clim as if she did not wish to recognize him. Then, sighing, as if she were tired, she asked:

"Have your eyes begun aching? Why is it you always have some ache?"

"I never have any aches," said Clim indignantly, struggling to keep back his tears.

From that day on he nursed an intense enmity against Boris. The latter, having quickly sensed this feeling, took to ridiculing Clim, persistently making fun of almost every step he took and every word he said. The excursion on the steamer evidently had not calmed Boris. He still seemed as nervous as he had been on

his arrival from Moscow. His dark eyes continued to flash suspiciously and angrily, and at times he would lapse into a strange abstract languor; he would stop the game he was playing and go off alone.

"He is going off to cry," Clim would guess, with malicious pleasure.

Lidia and Turoboev continued to look after Boris carefully and attentively. Vera Petrovna caressed him. His father tried to amuse him. All were patient with his caprices and sudden fits of temper. Clim went through agonies trying to solve the mystery, questioning everybody. Luba Somov said didactically:

"That's his nerves—do you understand? There are some things like little white threads in the body, and they quiver."

Turoboev would not explain it further: "He had an unpleasant experience. But I don't want to talk about it."

Lidia finally consented to tell him, but demanded sternly: "Swear to God that Boris will never find out I told you!" '

Clim swore solemnly to keep the secret, and listened avidly to her palpitating, disjointed account:

"Boris was expelled from military school because he refused to betray his comrades, who had played some prank or other. No, it wasn't that alone," she hastily corrected herself, turning around to look. "For that, they put him in the guard house. But one teacher said, nevertheless, that Boris was a tattle-tale, and that he had peached. Then, when he was let out of the guard house, the boys flogged him at night. The next day, during lessons, he stuck a compass into the teacher's belly, and then they expelled him!"

With a sob she added: "He wanted to kill himself, too! He was even treated by a crazy-doctor!"

Her grey eyes filled with tears, and these tears, too, appeared to Clim to be dark. He became confused. Lidia wept so rarely,

and now, in her tears, she had come to resemble the other girls. Having lost her uniqueness, she called forth in Clim a feeling which was almost pity. Her story about her brother had neither touched nor amazed him. He always expected unusual actions from Boris. Taking off his eyeglasses and playing with them, he looked up at Lidia. He could find no words of consolation, yet he wanted to comfort her. Turoboev had already gone off to school.

She was standing with her back against the slender trunk of a birch, pushing at the tree with her shoulders. From the half-bare branches yellow leaves were slowly fluttering down. Lidia trampled them into the ground; with her fingers she brushed the unaccustomed tears from her cheeks, and there was something fastidious in the rapid movements of her sun-tanned hand. Her face also was tanned the colour of bronze; her slender, odd little figure was picturesquely enveloped in a blue dress trimmed with red. There was something unusually striking about her, as about the girls in a circus.

"Does he feel ashamed?" Clim asked finally.

"Yes! Just think! Here he'll fall in love with some girl, and he'll have to tell her about himself—and how can he ever tell about his flogging?"

Clim quietly agreed: "Yes, one couldn't mention that."

"He has even stopped being friendly with Luba, and now he is forever with Varya, because Varya keeps silent like a pumpkin," Lidia was saying thoughtfully. "But papa and I are so afraid for Boris. Papa even gets up during the night to see if he is asleep. And yesterday your mamma came when it was quite late; everybody was sleeping."

With her head pensively bowed, she went away, crushing yellow leaves into the earth with her heels. As soon as she was out of sight Clim felt himself well armed against Boris, able to repay him generously for all his jeers. It was a joy to feel this. On the

following day he could not keep from displaying this joy to Varavka. He exchanged greetings with him, carelessly putting his hand out, then immediately replacing it in his pocket. He smiled condescendingly at his foe, and, without saying a word to him, went away. But in the doorway of the dining-room, having turned around, he saw that Boris, leaning with his hands on the edge of the table, biting his lips, was gazing at his enemy in terror. Then Clim smiled again. In two leaps Boris was upon him, seized him by the shoulders, and, shaking him, asked in a low, hoarse voice:

"Why are you laughing?"

His face, pitted with smallpox, became mottled. He bared his teeth. His hands trembled on Clim's shoulders.

"Let me go," said Clim, afraid that Boris would strike him. But the latter very softly, and as though placating him, repeated:

"What are you laughing at? Tell me!"

"Not at you." Wriggling out from under the hand of Boris, Clim went away with lowered head, without looking around.

13

This scene had frightened him, and had instilled in him a more careful attitude toward Varavka, but still he could not deny himself an occasional look into the eyes of Boris—the look of one who knew his secret. He saw very well that his sneering glances excited the boy, and it was pleasant to see this. Boris made sport of him as daringly as ever, but watched him suspiciously the while, circling about him like a sparrow-hawk. These dangerous tactics rapidly brought Clim to the stage where he forgot cautiousness.

On one of those warm but pensive days, when the autumn sun seems to be saying farewell to the exhausted earth, the children

were playing in the garden. Clim was more animated than usual and Boris for once was in a kindly mood. Lidia and Luba were playing together in high spirits. The elder Somov girl was gathering a bouquet of bright-coloured maple and rowan leaves. Having caught a belated beetle, Clim offered it to Boris. Holding it out to him between thumb and finger, Clim said:

"Na, sekomoë!" (Here, [in]sect!)

The unintentional pun sent Clim into a fit of laughter, but Boris with an angry snort turned on him and struck him twice full in the face. Then he kicked Clim on the knee, knocking him off his feet, and fled headlong, sobbing wildly as he ran.

Clim also sobbed in pain and anger as he shook his fist threateningly at Boris' retreating figure. The Somov sisters tried to soothe him, but Lidia sprang out in front of him and gasped:

"How did you dare? You're wicked — you gave me your word! Oh, and I'm wicked too for telling you!

She ran off. The Somov girls led Clim into the kitchen to wash his bloody, battered face. His mother came in, frowning angrily, but at sight of him she exclaimed in fright: "My God, what has happened to you? Is your eye all right?"

She washed her son's face, led him away to his room, undressed him and put him to bed. After she had laid a cold compress over his swollen eye she sat down beside him and admonished:

"To tease a person who has been sinned against — that isn't like you. One must be generous."

Feeling that everyone was against him, that everyone was siding with Boris, Clim muttered, "But you said that it wasn't necessary, that it was foolish."

"What was foolish?"

"Being generous. You did say that! For I remember."

Bending toward him, gazing severely into his one unbandaged eye, his mother said:

"You mustn't think you understand everything that grown-ups say."

"No one loves me," Clim wailed, bursting into tears.

"That is foolish, my dear boy. It's foolish," she repeated, thoughtfully, smoothing his cheek with her light, fragrant hand. Clim was silent, waiting for her to say "I love you," but before she had a chance to say it, Varavka arrived. Stroking his beard, he sat down on the bed and inquired jocosely,

"But why do ye fight, ye ferocious Spaniards?"

Although he spoke jestingly his eyes were sad; they blinked uneasily. His well-cared-for beard was rumpled. He tried hard to make Clim laugh by reciting nonsense rhymes in a very high-pitched voice:

Games, dames, frames, salami,
Doodle-bugs, hippopotami,
Nightingales and express rifles,
Trifles all — all things are trifles.

His mother smiled at Clim, but her eyes, too, were sad. Finally Varavka thrust his hand under the blanket and began to tickle Clim's soles and heels. He forced the boy to burst into laughter and immediately went away, with Clim's mother.

The next evening they arranged a great feast of reconciliation: tea and cakes and candy, music and dancing. Before the party began they made Clim and Boris kiss each other, but Boris, in kissing, clenched his teeth and closed his eyes, while Clim felt a desire to bite him. Then someone proposed that Clim recite a poem by Nekrassov, *The Felling of the Trees*. When he had finished, Lidia's pretty friend, Alena Telepneva, offered to speak a piece. She went over to the piano, turned her eyes soulfully upward, and began to recite:

Mankind sleeps, my friend; come where shadows lurk;
Mankind sleeps; only stars can see through the garden's murk.
Even they see not through the branches pale
Nor can hear; none will hear, save the nightingale.

Smiling slyly, she delivered the next verses more softly:

And he, too, hears naught, save his loud song's charm;
None can hear — save the heart and arm;
Hears the heart what joy upon earth is wrought,
And what happiness we have hither brought. . . .

She was a very appealing little miss, like a picture on a candy box. Her small round face, framed in curling, chocolate-coloured hair, had kindled into a vivid glow; in her blue eyes glittered an unchildlike slyness. When she had finished her recitation, she made an elegant curtsy, and approached the table with studied grace. Everyone received her in amazed silence.

After a moment Varavka said: "Marvellous, eh?" What do you think of that, Vera Petrovna?"

Grasping his beard in one hand, he pulled it up over his face, and peering through the hair added: "So that's how early a woman starts, eh?"

Vera Petrovna shook a threatening finger, and hissed "Sh!" When she had whispered something that caused Varavka to spread out his hands in a gesture of apology, she turned to Alena Telepneva:

"Where did you learn to recite like that?"

The little girl, flushing with pride, said she had taken lessons from an old actress who lived in her parents' house. Lidia immediately cried: "Father, I want to take lessons from this actress, too!"

Clim was sitting in dejected silence. They had forgotten to praise him for his reading. He thought Alena a silly little thing, and, for all her beauty, just as unnecessary and uninteresting as Varya Somov.

The party progressed smoothly. Vera Petrovna played Lidia's and Boris's favourite pieces on the piano: Liyadov's *The Musical Snuff Box, The Troika,* by Chaikovski, and several other simple and charming compositions. Then Tanya Kulikova sat down at the piano, and bobbing up and down on her stool, began to bang out a waltz. Varavka and Vera Petrovna danced around the table. For the first time Clim realized how lightly this stalwart, heavy man could dance, how deftly he swung Clim's mother around, lifting her away from the floor. All the children, delighted, applauded the dancers. Boris cried out:

"Papa, you're magnificent!"

Clim noticed that his enemy had been softened by the music, the dances, the poetry. He, too, began to feel unusually lighthearted, stirred by the party's genial mood.

"Children, the quadrille!" commanded Clim's mother, wiping her temples with a lacy handkerchief. Lidia, still angry at Clim, sent her brother upstairs to fetch something. A moment later Clim followed him, possessed by a sudden impulse to say something friendly to Boris, perhaps even to apologize to him. But before he had run halfway up the stairs, Boris appeared at the head of it with dancing slippers in his hand. Halting, he bent down as though he meant to spring at Clim, but instead he began to walk down slowly, step by step. Clim heard his breathless whisper:

"Don't you dare come near me, you!"

Boris' cheek bones seemed to grow sharper. His chin was thrust out like a dog's as he crept forward slowly, crouching. Clim was frightened. Clutching the railing with one hand, he too began

slowly descending the stairs, expecting every moment that Varavka would pounce upon him. But Boris went on past him, muttering again through his teeth:

"Don't you dare!"

Frozen with fright, Clim stood still on the staircase. Something seemed to be tickling his throat. Tears were welling up in his eyes. He wanted to run off into the garden and hide himself. He walked down to the porch door. The wind was blowing the autumn rain against the panels. He struck the door with his fist, he scratched at it with a fingernail. His chest felt full to suffocation, then empty. After a few minutes he recovered himself and went back to the dining-room, where they were already dancing the quadrille. Pulling a chair up to the piano, he began playing a quadrille for four hands with Tanya.

14

Heavy, oppressive days followed, filled with fear and hatred of Boris. Clim refused to play with the other children. He moped about, watching Boris with avid attention, hoping to see him fall or hurt himself in some way. Boris, showing off, swung his body from side to side and staggered like a drunken man, but every move and every leap was perfectly timed and calculated. He never lost his balance. Everyone praised his skill, his energy, his ingenuity in planning games. Clim heard his mother say in a low voice to Boris' father: "What a talented lad!"

That year winter came late. It was near the end of November when a dry, fierce wind bound the river into a sheet of livid ice and lashed mercilessly at the snow-covered earth. In the sky, grown pallid and frozen, a white sun hastily described its short arc, and it seemed precisely from this faded sun that the pitiless cold was pouring down upon the earth.

One Sunday Boris, Lidia, Clim, and the Somov sisters went off to a newly cleared skating ground on the banks of a river near the city. The large oval of greyish-blue ice was surrounded by fir trees, their trunks roped together with soaked bark. The winter sun was sinking into the dark forest beyond the river. Lavender reflections lay along the ice. There were many skaters.

"This is like a sack of potatoes, not a skating ground," announced Boris scornfully when they arrived at the pond. "Who'll go with me on the river? You, Varya?"

"Yes," said the fat, colourless Somov girl.

They crawled under the rope, seized each other's hands, and swiftly darted across the river toward the meadows. They were followed by a bravura march, played thunderingly and dissonantly on the brass horns of the military band. Luba Somov was caught and pulled along by her friend, Inokov, who had been expelled from the *gymnasium,* a young gallant clad lightly in an old linen blouse tucked in at the belt, trousers that were much too wide for him, and a shaggy sheepskin cap set on his head at a rakish angle. Lidia stood for a moment watching Varya and Boris race headlong, swaying, as if on air, towards the red setting sun; then she suggested to Clim that they chase the other two. But when they had crawled under the rope and were starting out leisurely, Lidia cried out: "Look! They're gone!"

As she spoke Clim saw that Boris and Varya had vanished. "They must have stumbled," he said.

"No!" whispered Lidia, jostling him so violently with her shoulder that he fell on one knee. "Look! They're fallen through."

She skated ahead quickly to where, close to the farther bank against the scarlet background of the sunset, they could discern two round, red objects leaping convulsively.

"Faster!" screamed Lidia, alongside him. "Strap! Throw them your strap! Call out to them!"

Clim rapidly outstripped her, gliding along with such speed that his wide-open eyes smarted.

Toward him a dark pit of swirling water seemed to be creeping, widening as it crept. He heard the chill splash of the water and saw two hands, very red. With outspread fingers the hands groped along the edges of the ice. The ice broke off, and crackled as it broke. The hands fluttered, like the plucked feathers of some strange bird, and between them bobbed up and down a smooth, glistening head, the eyes enormous in a bloodied face. It bobbed up, disappeared, and again above the water quivered the small red hands. Clim heard a hoarse shriek: "Let me go! Let me go, you fool! Let go!"

Not more than five or six paces separated Clim from the edge of the ice hole. He made a sharp turn and fell down, striking his elbow hard against the ice. Lying flat on his stomach he saw how the water, peculiar in colour, opaque, heavy-looking, was slapping Boris on the head and shoulders. It tore his hands away from the ice; it playfully splashed over his head, whipping into his face, into his eyes. Boris' whole face was one wild howl — even his eyes seemed to be shouting: "Your hand . . . Give me your hand. . . ."

"Right away, one minute," muttered Clim, trying to unfasten the burning cold buckle of his strap. "Hold on — just a minute. . . ."

There was an instant when Clim thought how good it would be to see Boris with such a distorted, frightened face, so helpless and so miserable — not here, but at home, and to have everybody see him as he was at that minute.

But he thought of this dimly, through a terror which gripped him in its ice-cold vice, depriving him of all strength. Painfully

he jerked the strap loose with a tingling hand, and threw it into the water. Boris caught the end, pulled on it, and drew Clim quickly over the ice, nearer to the water. With a cry Clim closed his eyes and let the strap slip out of his hands. When he opened his eyes, he saw the heavy, dark-purple water slapping more frequently, more powerfully, against Boris's shoulders and dripping head. He saw the wet hands, with their occasional red glitter, moving closer, breaking down the ice. With a convulsive movement of his entire body, Clim crawled farther away from those dangerous hands; but no sooner had he crawled away than the hands and head of Boris suddenly vanished. Upon the churning water there floated only a black caracul cap. Small, leaden pieces of ice swam about it. The water heaved up in little waves, reddish in the rays of the sunset.

Clim heaved a deep sigh of relief. This horror seemed to have been going on for a torturingly long while. But though he had grown dull from fear, he was still keen enough to be amazed that Lidia was only now skating up to him. She seized him by the shoulder, struck his back with her knee, and began to cry piercingly: "Where — where are they?"

Clim watched the water until as it grew calm and flowed quietly on its course, carrying with it Boris' cap. Then he muttered, as if to himself: "She drowned him. He shouted 'Let go!' He cursed her. He tore the strap away. . . ."

Lidia screamed and fell down on the ice.

The ice crunched under skates; black figures of people streamed toward the ice hole. A man in a short sheepskin jacket thrust a long staff into the water and yelled at the top of his lungs: "Move on! You'll fall through. It's shaky here, gentlemen; there's been a machine working here — don't you know that?"

Clim got to his feet. He started to raise Lidia up, but his feet were knocked from under him again. He fell on his back, strik-

ing his head. A moustached soldier seized him by the hand and dragged him, skates and all, across the ice, shouting: "Drive everybody away!"

You educated people—you give orders, but you don't know the law yourselves! scoffed the *mouzhik* in the sheepskin jacket as he continued to search the water with his staff.

Clim heard someone in the crowd question gravely, doubtfully: "But was there really a boy? Perhaps there was no boy at all!"

"There was!" Clim wanted to shout out, and could not.

When he regained consciousness he was at home in bed with a high fever. His mother's face was bending over him. Her eyes, small and reddened, were those of a stranger, and her face was dissolving before his very eyes.

"Did they pull them out?" asked Clim after a silence, looking at a grey-haired man in eye-glasses who stood in the middle of the room. Clim's mother laid her pleasantly cool palm on his forehead and made no answer.

"Did they pull them out?" he repeated.

His mother said, "He is whispering something."

"Delirium," said the grey-haired man, and his voice was deafening.

Clim lay in bed for seven weeks, suffering with an inflammation of the lungs. During that time he learned that Varvara Somov had been buried, but that Boris had not been found.

III

1

AT seventeen, Clim Samghin was a graceful youth of medium height. His walk was sober and unhurried. He spoke seldom; when he did so he expressed his thoughts exactly and simply, emphasizing his words with quiet gestures of his very white hands that had long palms and slender fingers like a musician's. His rather precise, sharp-nosed face was adorned with smoke-tinted glasses which screened the distrustful gleam in his cold, blue eyes. His hair, not thick but coarse, cut short according to the school regulations, and his neat uniform emphasized his staidness. Although he was not a brilliant student, he ingratiated himself with the teachers by his good-breeding and decorum. He sat in the sixth form, but behaved as a stranger among his classmates. His friends were in the seventh and eighth forms. It was known that Father Tikhon, the religious preceptor, who was famed for the keenness of his mind, had said of Clim during a meeting of the teachers' council:

"The strings of his mind are tuned high and harmoniously. I value particularly his careful and even skeptical attitude toward those trifling things with which our young men are so much inclined to be infatuated, to their own harm."

Xaverii Rzhiga, who, as time passed, seemed rather to dry up than to age, said to Clim: "I have no doubts of your good sense. I'll say, though, that you have friends who are capable of compromising you. Of these I would name Ivan Dronov and Makarov. I have warned you."

Clim made a correct and silent bow to the principal. He knew his comrades, of course, somewhat better than Rzhiga did, and although he felt no special sympathy for them, still they both made him wonder. Dronov, as indefatigably and hungrily as ever, absorbed everything that could be absorbed. He was an excellent student, and was considered an ornament to the school; but Clim knew that the teachers hated Dronov as much as Dronov secretly hated them. Dronov's attitude, not only toward the teachers but also toward those pupils who were sons of influential people, was that of a toady; but through his flattering speeches and cordial smiles there constantly escaped the bitter or conceited phrases of one who is firmly convinced of his own worth.

Father Tikhon characterized him as follows: "The aforementioned Dronov, Ivan, behaves like the spy sent into the land of Canaan."

His flattened-down skull must have prevented Dronov from growing vertically, so he grew in width. Though he remained short in stature, he became stocky and broad-shouldered. His hands stuck out clumsily to the right and left, and his bowlegs had become more noticeable. He always moved his elbows as though he were shoving his way through a crowd. Clim Samghin reflected that even a hump could not have made Dronov's body uglier; on the contrary, it might have given his squat figure a finishing touch.

Dronov occupied the mezzanine floor where Tomilin had lived at one time, and his room was cluttered up with cardboard boxes, verbena leaves, specimens of minerals, and books which Ivan had begged from the red-haired teacher. He still had a vein of whimsicality, but it no longer became him. It seemed to Clim that Dronov was forcing himself to be whimsical. Dronov had not forgotten his determination to become a "better man than Lomonossov"; he still referred to it boastfully on rare occasions.

Clim found that Dronov had become as gullible as Tanya Kulikova. He was amazed at Dronov's capacity for swallowing all kinds of "mental pabulum," as Nestor Katin, a writer who rented a room in a wing of the same house, used to call it. But sometimes there was mingled with Clim's amazement a strange uneasy feeling that Dronov was robbing him of his ideas. Dronov had got over the habit of twitching the end of his nose, and had taken to grunting absent-mindedly:

"*Khrumm*. . . . How think you the eye was formed?" he would ask. "The very first eye? There must have been some sort of blind creature crawling about—a worm, let's say. Well, now, how did it come to see, eh?"

"I don't know," Clim would answer, his mind elsewhere. But Dronov went on conjecturing:

"Probably through pain. Thrusting forward with its front end, with its thick skull, against all sorts of obstacles, it experienced pain from the impact, and in the place where these impacts came, there was formed a sentient, seeing apparatus, eh?"

"Perhaps," Clim concurred half-heartedly.

"I shall find out about this," promised Dronov.

He read Buckle, Darwin, Sechenov, the Apocrypha; and the works of the Fathers of the Church. He read the *Genealogical History of the Tartars,* by Abdul-Ghazi Baghodour Khan. And as he read his head moved intently up and down, as though he were storing up strange thoughts and facts out of the book. It seemed to Clim that this made his ugliness still more marked, his face flatter than ever. But none of the strange questions which so agitated Dronov were to be found in these books. Dronov himself was thinking them up, in order to set off the originality of his mind.

"A horse," was what Makarov called him, without pronouncing the "h."

Makarov was also an ornament to the school, and a hero besides. For two years he had waged a stubborn war with the instructors over a button. He had a habit of twisting the buttons off his uniform. While reciting, he would put his hand up under his chin and twist a button of his collar. It was always dangling. Frequently he pulled it off before his teacher's eyes and hid it in his pocket. For this singular habit he was punished. He was told that if the collar of his uniform pinched his neck, the collar should be altered. But nothing could change him.

He had many other failings. He refused to cut his hair according to the prescribed rule. It stood out in all directions from his knobby skull in piebald tufts, dark and fair. In spite of his seventeen years, he seemed already to be growing grey. It was common knowledge that he drank, smoked, and played billiards in filthy little cafés.

Transferred from another city, he had been put into the fifth form, and for three years he had delighted the teachers with his scholarly achievements at the same time that he confused and irritated them by his conduct. He was of medium size, graceful and strong; his step was light, gliding, like a circus performer's. His hawk-nosed, sharply outlined face — not at all Russian in type — was softened by brown eyes as gentle as a woman's and by the faint smile on his handsome red lips, the upper one already covered with a dark down.

Clim could not understand the friendship that existed between these two very different persons. Alongside Makarov, Dronov seemed still more repulsive, and evidently he was aware of it. He spoke of Makarov in the manner of one who, though apprehensive of something, is prepared to defend himself. He would puff out his chest haughtily and throw back his head; his small eyes, after glancing about suspiciously, would come to a stop, but they remained alert, dubious, and as though he expected some-

thing to happen suddenly. Makarov's attitude toward Dronov, Clim noticed, was one of curiosity. He displayed toward Dronov the assurance of one who knew himself to be more experienced and less obtuse. Clim would never have permitted anyone to patronize him in such a fashion. One day Dronov, pushing Draper's book, *Catholicism and Science,* toward Makarov, announced:

"It is proved here that the monks were the enemies of science, yet at the same time Giordano Bruno, Campanella, Morus. . . ."

"To the devil with all this trash," Makarov advised, drawing at his cigarette until it glowed.

"But I want to know the truth," insisted Dronov, fixing his suspicious, inimical gaze on Makarov.

"Ask about it at Tomilin's or at Katin's — they'll tell you all about it," said Makarov apathetically, puffing his words out with the smoke.

Once Clim asked him:

"Do you like Dronov?"

"Do I like him? No!" Makarov answered firmly, "but there is something about him that puzzles me and I want to get to the bottom of it."

After a bit he added casually:

"It is hard to get on with such a fop."

"Why?"

"Well — He feels that he must dress well, wear a special sort of hat and carry a little cane about with him. Besides, there's the matter of girls. The chief thing in life, brother, is the girls, and they like a chap to woo them with a little cane, with a sword, with poetry!"

Makarov began to whistle softly through his teeth.

Clim Samghin was quick to adopt the opinions of others when they simplified matters. Accepting the ideas of others made

it possible for one to have an opinion about everything. He learned never to commit himself definitely on any question and this fortified his reputation as a man who knew how to think independently, how to be mentally self-sufficient. After hearing Makarov's opinion of Dronov, Clim decided that Dronov's searches after truth were the strivings of a jackdaw to ornament itself with peacock feathers. Since he himself moved in the uneasy current of this striving, he well knew the force and necessity of it.

He didn't consider his comrades as clever as himself, but at the same time he realized that they were more talented, more interesting, than he. He knew that the wise priest, Tikhon, had said of Makarov:

"A brilliant youth. However, we must not forget the exquisite expression of the famous Hans Christian Andersen:

The gilt will rub and stain;
The pigskin will remain."

Clim longed to rub the gilt off Makarov; it blinded him. Yet there were times when his comrade yielded to incomprehensible moods of uncertainty and unrest which crushed his spirit. As for Ivan Dronov, he seemed to be little more than an ardent gambler working with a cold deck, who was in a hurry to skin everybody. At times Clim sincerely wondered when he saw that the attitude of his comrades toward him was more trustful than his toward them. Evidently they recognized in him one more clever, more experienced, than they. But this honest wonder never persisted for long, and appeared only in those rare minutes when, growing tired of constantly observing himself, he felt that he was treading a path that was both difficult and dangerous.

2

One evening Makarov himself rubbed off his gilt. It happened while they were sitting in the enclosure of the Church of the Assumption on the Mount, admiring the sunset. It was one of those faery evenings when the Russian winter, with the overpowering generosity of a grandee, unfolds all its cold beauties. The hoarfrost on the trees glittered like rose crystal. The snow sparkled like a dust of rainbow colours. Beyond the lavender-hued bald patches of the river, denuded by the wind, a magnificent pall of cloth-of-gold lay upon the meadows; and above it was a blue silence which, it seemed, nothing could ever disturb. This eerie silence enveloped everything one saw, as though expecting—even demanding—that only words of especial significance be uttered.

Makarov exhaled into the frosty air a blue stream of cigarette smoke. Then he asked suddenly:

"You don't write any poetry?"

"I?" Clim was amazed. "No! Do you?"

"I've made a start. The result is execrable."

Suddenly, as though he had been wronged, he launched into his story, shamelessly:

"For almost two years I've been able to think of nothing but girls. I can't bring myself to prostitutes—I haven't come to that yet—but I have been driven to masturbation. Sometimes I think I will chop my hands off! In this urge, brother, there is something offensive to the verge of tears, a revulsion toward one's self. I feel like an idiot when I am with a girl. She may be talking to me about books, about all sorts of poesy—but I'm thinking of what her breasts might be like, and longing madly to kiss her—just to kiss her and then willingly die!"

He threw away his unfinished cigarette; it stuck in the snow

like a candle, the burning end upward, sending a curly little stream of blue smoke into the cold clear air. Makarov gazed at it and spoke in a low voice:

"It's as stupid as any two schoolmasters. And the worst part of it is that you can't do anything about it. You haven't experienced this yet, have you? You will soon!"

He got up, crushed the cigarette with his shoe, and continued, his troubled eyes fixed on the gleaming cross of the church:

"Dronov has read somewhere that it is the 'spirit of nature' which is active in this case, that it is 'as Venus wills.' The devil take them, this nature and this Venus! What have I to do with them? I don't want to be like a he-dog! All this arouses in me weariness and thoughts of suicide — there's the whole story in a nutshell!"

Clim listened to him with intense interest; it was gratifying to see Makarov portraying himself as powerless and shameless. Makarov's unrest was as yet unfamiliar to Clim; although on rare occasions, of nights, when he felt the perturbing demands of his body, he would go off into thoughts of how his first affair would be enacted. In these fantasies the girl was always Lidia.

Makarov whistled a bit, and thrust his hands into his pockets, shivering as if with cold.

"Luba Somov is a pug-nosed little fool; I don't care for her; she doesn't suit me. But still I feel myself dependent upon her. You know, the girls are rather well-inclined toward me, but . . ."

"Not all of them!" thought Clim, recalling Lidia Varavka's disdain of Makarov. But he said nothing.

"Let's go — it's cold!" said Makarov gloomily. "Why are you so silent?"

"What can I say?" Clim shrugged. "It's a banality to say that the inevitable is inevitable."

For several minutes they walked in silence broken only by the crunching of the snow under their feet.

"Why does this begin so early? Brother, there's some sort of mockery in it" resumed Makarov.

Clim did not answer immediately. After a moment he said:

"Schopenhauer is probably right."

"But perhaps Tolstoi is right: turn your head away from everything and look into a corner. But what if one turns away from what is best in himself, eh?"

Clim Samghin kept silent. The troubled gropings of his comrade gave him a pleasant feeling of superiority, and he found himself for once sincerely sorry for Makarov when the latter suddenly bade him farewell and stepped into the court of an inn.

3

The passing years had not yet brought into Clim's life anything to stir him very deeply. Things went on smoothly in their accustomed courses. Gradually, quite naturally, older people dropped out of Clim's life, one after the other. His father found it necessary to take long journeys more and more frequently. He diminished, melted away, as it were, and finally vanished altogether. Before that he had begun to speak with less and less assurance, as though he were finding difficulty in choosing his words. He had started to grow a beard and moustaches, but the reddish hair on his face grew straight outward, so that when his upper lip began to look like a toothbrush, his father, ashamed, shaved off the concealing hair, and Clim saw that his father's face had grown pitifully shrunken and aged. Varavka seemed to upbraid him whenever he spoke.

"We-ell, now. Ivan Akimich, what is this, eh? Have you sold the lumber mill?"

Whenever Varavka spoke, Samghin's ears reddened; he turned his eyes away when he answered, and stamped his foot like a scissors-grinder. Often he came home intoxicated; he would go into Clim's mother's room, and from there, for a long time, one heard his whining little voice. On the morning of his last departure, still fuddled, he entered Clim's room, accompanied by the parting words of his mother, uttered in a low voice:

"I beg of you — please — let there be no dramatic monologues."

"Well, my dear Clim," said he loudly and briefly, although his lips quivered and his swollen red eyes blinked as though dazzled, "business affairs compel me to go away for a long time. I shall live in Finland, in Viborg. That's that. Mitya is also going with me. Well, goodbye!"

Embracing Clim, he kissed his forehead, his cheeks, patted his back, and added:

"Grandfather is also going with us. Yes, goodbye! Re — respect your mother! She deserves . . ."

Without saying exactly what his mother deserved, he made a vague gesture with his hand and scratched his chin. It occurred to Clim that he had wanted to cover his trembling lips with his palm.

When his grandfather, his father, and his brother — who had bidden Clim a surly farewell — had gone away, the house seemed none the emptier for their departure. His life was so undisturbed by their going that after a few days Clim recalled the unbelieving words he had heard as he lay on the frozen river the day Boris Varavka was drowned:

"But was there really a boy? Perhaps there wasn't any boy at all?"

The horror Clim had felt during those moments — when the red clutching hands, thrusting themselves out of the water, had been creeping toward him — he had firmly put out of his mind

and tried to forget. The scene of Boris' destruction came to his mind ever more rarely; it had become unreal, like some unpleasant vision beheld in a dream. But in those unforgettable words of the skeptical man there was something importunately persistent, as though their aim was to affirm, in an amusing by-word uttered with a wink:

"Perhaps there wasn't any boy at all!"

Clim liked such bywords, dimly sensing their slippery equivocacy, and noticing that it was just such expressions which were readily received as wisdom. At night, in bed, before falling asleep, he would think over everything he had heard during the day. He winnowed away, like chaff, the incomprehensible and the commonplace, and painstakingly stored up in his memory the more sizeable grains of sundry wise things in order that, should the occasion arise, he might use them and thus strengthen his reputation as a deeply-thinking youth. He had a way of saying something that was not his own so guardedly, casually, and at the same time nonchalantly, as to make it appear that what he said was only an insignificant fragment of the treasures of his mind. There were moments of success which, when he recalled them, made him regard himself with the same wondering admiration which others showed toward him.

His pleasure at these times was often turned to despair by the thought of Lidia, who could not or would not see him as others saw him. For days, even weeks, at a time she seemed not to see him at all, to act as though he were for her incorporeal, colourless, non-existent. The girl was becoming more and more queer and difficult as she grew up. Varavka said, smiling into his brushy beard:

"She takes after her mother. That one, too, was a master-hand at inventing things. She'd think up something and then come to believe it."

The terms "invention," "to think up," "to invent," were used constantly by Lidia's father. The words always calmed and fortified Clim except when they applied to Lidia—a fact which aroused in him a very complex feeling toward this girl.

4

In the summer of the second year after Boris' death, when Lidia was in her twelfth year, Igor Turoboev refused to attend the military school and was sent off to a school in Peterburg. A few days before his departure, during breakfast, Lidia announced to her father that she loved Igor, that she could not live without him, and did not wish him to study in another city.

"He must live and learn here," she demanded, striking the table with her small sturdy fist, "and when I'm fifteen and a half years old, we're going to marry."

"That's nonsense, Lidka," her father said severely, "I forbid you. . . ."

Without waiting even to hear what he was forbidding, Lidia got up from the table and ran out, before Varavka had a chance to stop her. In the doorway, seizing hold of the door jamb, she warned dramatically:

"This is God's affair!"

"What a lofty girl," remarked Clim's mother, looking approvingly at Clim, who was laughing. Varavka, too, began to laugh.

Before they had finished breakfast, Igor Turoboev appeared, looking pale, with dark shadows under his eyes. He clicked his heels correctly before Clim's mother and kissed her hand. Then he halted in front of Varavka and ringingly proclaimed that he was in love with Lidia, that he could not go to Peterburg, that he had the honour to ask Varavka. . . .

Without hearing his speech to the end, Varavka burst into

laughter. His enormous body rocked to and fro; his chair creaked. Vera Petrovna smiled condescendingly. Clim stared at Igor in angry amazement. As Igor stood there, immovable, he seemed to be drawing himself up, growing taller. He waited until Varavka's laughter had subsided. Then his voice rang out as before:

"I have the honour to ask you to tell my papa that, if this is not acceded to, I shall kill myself. I beg of you to believe this. Papa does not."

For several seconds the man and the woman regarded each other in silence. Then Clim's mother indicated the door to him with her eyes. Clim went off to his room abashed, not knowing what to think of this scene. From his window he saw Varavka, wagging his beard ferociously, lead Igor by the arm into the street. Later he returned accompanied by Igor's dried-up father, a bald little man in a grey frock-coat and grey breeches with red seams. For a long while they walked about the garden. Turoboev would say something in a hoarse, breaking voice; Varavka answered dully, mopping his red face frequently and nodding his head. His mother came and commanded Clim sternly:

"It is time for you to be going to Tomilin's for your lesson; you, of course, will not bother to tell him anything about such foolish things."

When Clim returned from the lesson and asked for Lidia he was told that he mustn't see her. Lidia was locked up in her room. The house was tensely quiet; it seemed to Clim that something would, at any moment, fall down with a fearful crash. But nothing fell. His mother and Varavka evidently had gone away somewhere, so Clim went out into the garden and stood watching the window of Lidia's room. The girl did not appear at the window; only Tanya Kulikova's dishevelled head passed by it occasionally. Clim threw himself down on a bench and sat there for a long time thinking of nothing, remembering Igor's and Varavka's

faces. He hoped Igor would receive a thorough flogging. As for Lidia — for a long time he considered how she should be punished, but could not devise for her any chastisement which would not also hurt him.

His mother and Varavka returned late, after he was in bed and asleep. He was awakened by the laughter and noise they raised in the dining-room; they were laughing as if they were drunk. Varavka was constantly trying to sing, while Clim's mother was shouting:

"Why, not that way. Not that way at all!"

They had gone into the parlour. Clim's mother began to play something gay on the piano, but suddenly the music came to an abrupt stop. Clim dozed off and was awakened by the sound of heavy running in the room above. Then he heard shouts:

"What devil's comedy is this! Lidia isn't here. Tatiana is snoozing. Lidia is gone! Do you understand?"

Clim jumped out of bed, hurriedly dressed himself, and ran out into the dining-room. It was dark there. A lamp was burning in his mother's bedroom; in the doorway Varavka stood clutching the door frame as if he were crucified to it. He was in a dressing-gown and had slippers on his bare feet. Clim's mother was hurriedly wrapping herself up in a cape. Clim was ordered to awaken Dronov and to search for Lidia in the garden and courtyard, where Tanya Kulikova was shouting guiltily and none too loudly:

"Lidka! Come! What foolishness is this! Lidusha!"

Clim felt indescribably strange. This time it seemed to him that he was participating in an "invention" which was incomparably more interesting than anything else he knew — more interesting and much more fearful. And the night, too, was a strange one. A warm wind blew fitfully, shaking the trees; it

stifled all odours with dry, warm dust. The clouds, crawling over the sky, momentarily extinguished the moon. Everything seemed to be swaying lightly, moving noiselessly in a weird alarming instability. Sleepy and angry, Dronov stalked about on his bandy legs; he stumbled, he yawned, he spat. When his body vanished against the background of the bushes, his head, above them, floated along like a balloon as he walked.

"Perhaps she has run into the Turoboev garden," Dronov suggested, going in to look.

There they found her, sitting silently on the back of an iron garden bench under some overhanging bushes. Diminutive in the darkness, the girl's slender figure, huddled up formlessly, looked at a distance like a white bird perched on the bench.

"Lida!" Clim cried out.

"What are you yelling about, like a policeman?" Dronov asked in a low voice. He shoved Clim aside rudely with his shoulder and addressed Lidia:

"What's the use of sitting here? Let's all go home."

Clim, indignant at Dronov's rudeness, was astonished to hear him speak politely to Lidia, as if she were a grown-up.

"He was beaten, yes?" asked the girl without stirring, ignoring Dronov's extended hand. Her words sounded hoarse and broken, like those of a child who has wept for a long time.

"I fell like one blind as I was climbing over the fence," she said, sobbing. "Like a fool. I can't walk!"

Clim and Dronov helped her off the bench and sat her on the ground, but she let out a cry and slumped down like a limp doll. The boys barely managed to hold her up. When at last they got her started off toward home, Lidia told them that she had fallen down, not when she was crawling over the fence, but in trying to climb up the water-spout into the window of Igor's room.

"I wanted to know what he was doing."

"He's sleeping," said Dronov.

Lidia raised her hand to her mouth and sucked away the blood under a torn finger nail.

In the yard Varavka, striding about in his loose robe and flat Tartar cap, began roaring at his daughter.

"What are you up to now?"

But suddenly, frightened, he caught her in his arms and lifted her up.

"What is the matter with you?"

The girl burst out in a despairing cry that Clim never forgot:

"Oh, papa, you don't understand anything! You can't—you didn't love mamma!"

"Sh, sh! You're crazy," Varavka hissed and ran off with her into the house, losing one morocco slipper.

"The she-goat has grown frisky," said Dronov quietly, a mocking smile on his lips. "Well, I guess I'll go to sleep now!"

But he did not go, Instead, he seated himself on a step of the kitchen porch, scratched his shoulder meditatively and muttered:

"A fine game she's thought up!"

Clim paced up and down the yard, deep in thought: Could it be possible that all this was nothing but a game—all of it "thought up"? From the open window in the second storey came the anxious voices of his mother and Varavka. Tanya Kulikova dashed down the staircase.

"Don't lock the gates. I am going after the doctor!" she said, running out into the street.

Dronov's mutterings continued:

"Rzhiga made me read through the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. There's bosh for you! All these Achilleses and Patrokleses are just chumps. What a bore! The *Odyssey* is better. There Odysseus

managed to take in everybody with nary a fight. He's one grand crook, fit enough even for this day."

"Clim! Go to bed!" Vera Petrovna called out sternly from the window. "Dronov, wake the caretaker, and then you go to bed, too."

5

Within a few days Lidia's romance became town gossip. The boys in the *gymnasium* questioned Clim:

"What sort of a girl is she?"

Clim answered with restraint; he did not feel like speaking about it. But Dronov chattered animatedly:

"She's not handsome—that's why she has fallen in love. A handsome girl wouldn't fall in love! No sir!"

Clim listened to his chatter with vexation, but at the same time with the expectation that Dronov might perhaps say something that would clear up Clim's perplexity about it all.

"I says to her: You're still a little girl," Dronov rambled on to the boys, "and to him, I also says. . . . Well, of course, it's an interesting thing for him; it's interesting for anyone to have someone fall in love with him."

It was annoying to listen to the way Dronov lied, but, perceiving that the lies were making Lidia a heroine among the *gymnasium* boys, Clim did not stop him. The boys listened intently, and the eyes of some of them bore that strange sadness in their gaze which was already familiar to Clim in the far-away stare of Tomilin's glassy eyes.

Lidia had wrenched her leg so severely that she had to lie in bed for eleven days. Her left hand, too, was bandaged up. Before Igor left for school, Mme. Turoboev, stout, pop-eyed, and asthmatic, brought him to bid farewell to Lidia. The enamoured pair, embracing, wept. Igor's mother, too, burst into tears.

"This is silly, yet good to see," she said, carefully wiping her eyes with a handkerchief. "It is good because it recalls our bygone youth."

Varavka gloomily pronounced a ponderous and unfamiliar word.

The children had to be pacified. Yes, they would be bridegroom and bride; that would come about in due time, when they were grown up, they were told. Until then they were given permission to write to one another. Clim was soon convinced that they had been deceived. Lidia wrote to Igor every day, giving her letters to Igor's mother, and patiently awaited his answers. But Clim noticed that Lidia's letters somehow fell into Varavka's hands. He read them to Clim's mother, and they both laughed over them. Lidia worried herself into a frenzy. Then she was told that Igor had been placed in an institution so strict that its director didn't permit the boys to correspond even with their relatives. "The place is like a monastery," her father lied, while Clim wanted to cry out to Lidia: "Your letters are in his pocket!"

But Clim saw that even as she listened, with her lips tightly drawn, to her father's stories, Lidia did not believe them. She twisted her handkerchief into hard knots or tugged nervously at the hem of her school apron; she turned her eyes away as though she were ashamed to look into her father's broad bearded face, flushed and swollen. Clim finally said to her:

"Do you know that they are deceiving you?"

"Keep still!" Lidia cried, stamping her foot. "This is none of your business! It isn't you who's being deceived. Besides, papa doesn't fool me — he only tries to because he is afraid. . . ."

Flushing with anger, she stopped abruptly and ran off.

In the *gymnasium* she was considered one of the leading madcaps. She was negligent in her studies. Like her brother, she brought animation into the games, and (as Clim knew through

the complaints brought against her) much also that was capricious, trying, and even malicious. She became even more pious, and zealously attended church services. During moments of pensiveness her grey eyes became fixed in such a penetrating stare that Clim grew uneasy under their scrutiny.

Her manner toward him was almost as contemptuous and mocking as it was toward all other boys, and it was no longer she who proposed to Clim, but he who proposed to her:

"Would you like to go for a walk with me and talk a bit?"

She rarely, and none too willingly, acceded to this request. When she was with him she no longer talked with Clim about God, cats, and playmates. Instead, she would listen thoughtfully to his stories about the *gymnasium;* his opinions of the teachers and the boys—about the books he had read. When Clim announced to her one day that he did not believe in God, she said casually:

"That's silly. In our class we have a girl who says that she doesn't believe—but that's because she's a hunch-back."

For three years Igor Turoboev had not come home even once during his vacations. Lidia kept silent about it, but when Clim attempted to start a conversation with her about her faithless lover, she coolly remarked:

"One speaks of love with only one man!"

6

When she was nearly fifteen years old Lidia began to shoot up in height, but her figure was still delicate and slender, light and buoyant as she walked. As she grew taller, her body became angular; her shoulder and hip bones stuck out; and although her breasts had begun to form, they were as pathetically sharp as her elbows, and even more unpleasant to Clim's eyes. Her nose

grew sharper; the thick and austere eyebrows turned darker, and her bee-stung lips were now disturbingly vivid. Her face was so very familiar to Clim that he was amazed when he first realized that a new face — one almost strange to him — was emerging mysteriously from Lidia's familiar features, replacing the childish visage he knew so well. Sometimes Clim felt this so keenly that he wanted to cry out to the girl: "What are you?"

At times he would ask:

"What is the matter with you?"

"Nothing," she would answer, wonderingly. "Why?"

"Your face is changed."

"Yes? How?"

He could not answer these questions. Often now, unconsciously, he used the politer form of address to her. Neither of them noticed that he did it.

He was particularly abashed by a new way she had of gazing at him frankly for an instant, then averting her eyes; it was precisely this gaze that transformed her into a stranger. This gaze, sharp and keen, was expectant of something; it sought this something and even demanded it; and suddenly becoming contemptuous, coldly repulsed it. Another strange thing was that she had driven away all her cats; indeed, in her attitude toward all animals there now appeared an unwholesome squeamishness. Whenever she heard a horse neigh she frowned, shuddered, and wrapped her shawl closely about her. Dogs revolted her. Even roosters and pigeons affected her unpleasantly.

Her thoughts, too, had become sharply outlined and angular like her body.

"It's a bore to study," she would say, "and what's the use of learning about things that I cannot do myself, or that I shall never see?"

Once she said to Clim:

"You know a great deal. It must be very inconvenient."

Varavka's housekeeper, the good-humoured Tanya Kulikova, who was kindly inclined toward everything in the world, complained of Lidia in the same words Clim's mother applied to her magnificent hair:

"This is my torment."

But Tanya spoke without vexation, tenderly and lovingly. Grey hairs had appeared on her temples; and on her lined face was the timid, apologetic smile of one who knows she is unsuccessful, of no interest to anybody, and feels very guilty about it.

7

A gay fellow had come to live in the wing of the house, one Nestor Nikolaevich Katin, a writer, with his wife, her sister, and a flap-eared dog named Reverie. The writer's real name was Pimov, but he explained his choice of a pseudonym jocosely:

"You see, our folk don't pronounce Nestor as 'Nestor,' but 'Nester,' so I would have been signing my stories 'Nesterpimov' —an 'Unbearable Fellow'! That's killing! Besides it is all the rage now to create pseudonyms after the names of your wives: Verin, Valin, Sashin, Mashin."

He was a shaggy little fellow. He had a small curly beard; the back of his neck was fringed with ringlets of dark hair; even his hands, his finger joints, were covered with dark wool. Lively, very active, a bustling little man and a tireless chatter-box, he reminded Clim of his father. His little eyes glistened animatedly. But Clim always, for some reason, suspected that this man wanted to appear gayer than he really was. When talking he leaned his head toward his left shoulder, as though listening to his own words, and the shell of his ear would quiver gently.

He used many words of church Slavic derivation: *ashche, ibo,*

pache, dondezhe, poeliku, paki i paki (but if, because, rather more, until such time, inasmuch as, again and again). Through this device, he evidently, but not very successfully, tried to make people laugh. He spoke rapturously of the beauty of forests and fields, of the patriarchalism of village life, of the endurance of the peasant women and the intelligence of the *mouzhiks,* of the soul of the people, simple and wise, and of how that soul was being poisoned by the city. He never missed an opportunity to explain to his listeners rural words unknown to them. At such times he would declare with pride:

"I know the popular speech better than Glieb Uspenski. He confuses the village dialect with that of the middle class; but you can't catch me at that — Oh no!"

Nestor Katin wore a peasant's tunic belted with a narrow little strap; he stuffed his trousers into his boots. He cut his hair high up and round, *à la mouzhik*. Altogether he looked like a master-artisan who earns good money and likes to live merrily. Almost every evening serious, thoughtful people visited him. It seemed to Clim that they were all very proud and affronted by something. They drank tea and vodka; they ate cold snacks of cucumbers, sausage, and pickled mushrooms. The writer, in some odd fashion, seemed to coil and uncoil; he ran about the room, talking incessantly:

"Yes, yes, Stepa, literature has broken away from life; it betrays the people; now they write pretty little trifles for the amusement of the well-fed. Sensitiveness to truth is lost. . . ."

Stepa, a broad-shouldered fellow, silver-bearded, blue-eyed, always sat apart from everybody else, gravely stirring the tea in his glass with his spoon. For an hour or two he would listen silently to the others, nodding his head in assent.

Then, suddenly, in a slow, colourless voice, he would speak of the demands of the popular soul, of the obligations of the in-

telligentsia, and at great length about the betrayal by the children of the sacred behests of their fathers. Clim noticed that this connoisseur of the obligations of the intelligentsia never ate the soft part of the bread, but only the crusts; that he did not like tobacco smoke. He made no effort to hide his dislike of vodka, which he drank grimly, as though from a sense of duty.

"You are right, Nestor. They forget that the people are a substance, that is, a first cause; but now they are putting to the fore the doctrine of the classes — a German doctrine, hm. . . ."

Makarov said that about this man there was something which reminded one of a wet nurse. He said this so frequently that even Clim began to believe it. Stepa, despite his beard, was not unlike a large-breasted peasant woman whose duty it was to feed other people's children with her milk.

On Sundays young people would gather at Katin's, and then the solemn discussions concerning "the people" were supplanted by songs and dances. The freckled Saburov, who attended a seminary, would spread his arms slowly in the smoke-filled air, as though he were treading water, and advise convincingly in a pleasant baritone:

"'Go thou out upon the Vo-o-lga. . . .'"

"'Whose moan,'" the chorus would chime in, not too harmoniously. The adults sang solemnly, repentantly; the writer's sharp tenor had a caustic ring. In the slow song there was something churchly, funereal. After the singing they danced a quadrille noisily, and the writer became noisier than anyone else, acting at the same time as both orchestra and conductor. Stamping out the time with his fat stubby legs, he played skillfully on a small cheap accordeon, and commanded the dancers roisteringly:

"Gents, sashay past the ladies! Drop your own, take another's!"

This would make everybody laugh, while the writer, becoming even more frenzied, sang to the tune of his accordeon, in time with the quadrille:

Little ones the hut surround
And their father quickly call:
Daddy, daddy—a man drowned
Our nets have brought us a haul!

Varavka, disgusted, had styled this merry-making "the dance of the fishes."

It seemed to Clim that the writer was making great, even desperate, efforts to be humorous. He hopped about, he shook, and he sweated. Portraying a brave, merry fellow, shouting words that were not his own, he worked sincerely to make the dancers laugh. When he succeeded, he would cry out in relief: *"Ukh!"*

Then he would begin all over again, making them laugh at his absurd words, his comic little hops. He would wink urgently at his wife, who, in self-forgetfulness, with a half-sleepy smile upon her doll's face, was executing the figures of the quadrille.

"Eh, you, softy!" her husband shouted to her.

His wife, a round and rosy little woman, and pregnant, was inexhaustibly kind to everybody. In a thin yet charming voice she, with her sister, would sing the songs of the Ukraine. Her sister, a taciturn individual with a long nose, always kept her eyes shut, as if she were afraid she might see something frightening. Silently, with precision, she poured out the tea and handed everybody cold snacks. Only on rare occasions would Clim hear her rich voice:

"That's so!" or, "That's hard to believe." She rarely uttered a word other than these two phrases.

Clim found it very pleasant at the house of these amusing people, who were a novelty to him. The room was decorated with cheerful, light wall-paper; and though all the furnishings were untidy and illkept, as at Varavka's, the place nevertheless had a homely, comfortable air. On rare occasions Tomilin joined their gatherings. He crossed the yard slowly, with solemn steps, careful not to glance at the Samghins' windows. Entering the writer's place, he silently shook hands with everyone and took his seat in a corner near the stove, where, with his head bent sideways, he listened to their disputes, their songs. Tanya Kulikova always ran in hurriedly. Her undistinguished face darkened when she caught sight of Tomilin, as fayence plates grow dark from age.

"How are things?" she would ask him.

"As usual," Tomilin would answer quietly, a note of annoyance in his voice.

Two or three times Varavka himself came. He looked on and listened for a bit; but at home he said to Clim and his daughter, shrugging his shoulders:

"It is the usual Russian bread-cider brewery, a show-booth in which tricks gone out of fashion are shown."

Clim reflected that this had been aptly expressed, and from then on it seemed to him that into Katin's wing of the house had been swept, from the main building, all those things about which a great hubbub had been raised in the same house ten years ago. But still he knew it was profitable for him to be at the writer's, even if it was sometimes boring. It was like the *gymnasium,* but with this one difference: the teachers did not become irritated, did not shout at the pupils, but taught truth, with warm faith in its power. This faith sounded in almost every word they spoke; and although Clim was not infatuated with it, yet he carried

away with him not only certain stimulating thoughts and apt expressions, but something else besides, something less tangible of which he felt a need. In his appraisal it figured as a knowledge of human beings.

Makarov thoughtfully drank his vodka and crunched pickled cucumbers and occasionally he whispered an angry comment into Clim's ear.

"The behests of the fathers! My father gave me this behest: 'You'd better study well, you scoundrel, or else I'll chase you out and you'll be a tramp!' Well, now, behold me studying. Only I doubt whether one can learn anything here!"

Due attention was paid to the younger guests—but this very attention constrained them. Makarov, Luba Somov, even Clim, usually sat in silence, oppressed. Once Luba remarked with a sigh:

"Their talk here is just like a downpour. I walk under an umbrella, and cannot hear my own thoughts."

Only Ivan Dronov, insistently and in a loud voice, put questions about the intelligentsia, about the significance of personalities in the process of history. The real authority on such questions was the man who looked like a wet-nurse. Of all the writer's offended-looking friends he seemed to Clim to have the most deeply injured air. Before answering a question this man would scrutinize everybody in the room with his pale eyes, and give a cautious grunt. Then, bending forward, he would stretch out his neck, revealing behind his left ear a bald bony nodule like a small potato.

"This is a question of the most profound significance for all humanity," he would begin in a high-pitched voice that sounded tired and dull. Katin, the writer, raised his hand and his eyebrows in warning, and his severe glance at the assemblage eloquently commanded: Order! Attention!

"But nowhere in the world is this question as important as it

is to us in Russia, because we have a class of people which even the highly cultured west could not have produced. I am speaking of the Russian intelligentsia, of people whose lot is the prison, exile, hard labour, torture, the gallows. . . ."

He spoke deliberately, and in his tone Clim sensed something strange, as if the orator was not striving to convince, but was hopelessly placating. The words, "hard labour," "tortures," "gallows" he used often and casually, as if they were the most common of everyday words. Clim had grown used to hearing them without feeling their fearful context.

Makarov glanced about skeptically and whispered to Clim:

"He speaks as though everything had happened three hundred years before our time. The wet-nurse's milk has turned sour."

From the corner Tomilin's pale eyes regarded the wet-nurse intently. Occasionally he broke in quietly:

"You accuse Marx of having stricken individuality out of history; but was not the same thing done in the *War and Peace* of Tolstoi, who is accounted an anarchist?"

Tomilin was not liked even here. He was answered briefly, negligently. Clim realized that the red-haired teacher liked this, and that he was deliberately irritating everybody. Once when Katin, the writer, having cursed out a magazine article he had been reading, flung the magazine on the window sill, from which it fell to the floor, Tomilin said:

"But now you, who are agnostic, wouldn't treat an icon that way; and yet in a book there is more soul than there is in an icon."

"Soul?" the writer echoed, confused; then angrily blurted out:

"What has soul got to do with this? It's a publicist's article, based on statistics. Soul, indeed!"

Katin, who was an avid hunter, was fond of going into raptures over nature. His face beamed with smiles when, emphasizing his words with a multitude of gestures, he dilated on the beauties of

nature—the chaste little birches, the pensive silence of forest ravines, the modest flowers of the fields, the ringing song of the birds—as though he had been the first to see and hear all these things. Waving his hands about in the air as a fish waves its fins, he would grow emotional:

"And everywhere there is unconquerable life: everything strives upward, toward the sky, violating the law of gravitation."

Tomilin asked, rubbing his hands:

"Then how is it that, proclaiming so eloquently your love for living things, you kill rabbits and birds only for the pleasure of killing? How are these two things to be reconciled?"

The writer turned half away from him as he grumbled:

"Turgeniev and Nekrassov also hunted. And Liev Tolstoi in his youth, and also many others. Are you a Tolstoian, or what?"

Then Tomilin smiled, and Clim, who had been listening, smiled too. To the latter this independent man who, quietly and stubbornly, agreeing with none, argued in terse phrases which stuck in one's memory, was becoming ever more instructive.

The writer brandished his arms convulsively and turned red to the very shoulders with emotion as he discoursed about Russian history—a heavy and endless chain of amusing, vain and stupid anecdotes, as he depicted it. He was the first to laugh over the funny and stupid episodes, but when he spoke of the base cruelties of those in power he placed his fist over his heart and beat his breast. It seemed always absurdly incongruous to see him, after his fiery speech, empty a pony of vodka and chase it down with a bit of bread crust thickly smeared with mustard.

"Read the *History of the Town of Glupov* (Fool-Town). There's a true and honest history of Russia!" he would say didactically.

Makarov would listen tight-lipped to the writer's speeches without looking at him, and then say to his comrades:

"Why does he boast of the fact that he's living under the surveillance of the police? Anyone would think that he had gotten the blue ribbon for good behaviour."

Another time, Makarov, observing how the writer was twisting and writhing as he talked, said to Lidia:

"Do you see with what great labour truth is born?"

Frowning, Lidia moved away from him.

She came to the wing of the house but rarely. After the very first visit, when she sat throughout the evening by the side of the kindly, voiceless wife of the writer, Lidia exclaimed, perplexedly:

"Why do they shout so? They seem to be just about ready to fly at each other, but the next minute they sit down together at the table, drink tea and vodka, swallow mushrooms! The writer's wife kept stroking my back, as if I were a cat!"

Lidia shuddered, wrinkled her nose in aversion, and added:

"And then this abdomen of hers—I can't stand pregnant women!"

"All of you are bad!" exclaimed Luba Somov. "As for me, I like these people. They are just like cooks in the kitchen before some great holiday—Easter or Christmas."

Clim glanced at the homely girl disapprovingly. He had begun to observe that Luba could say clever things—a fact which for some reason displeased him. But he was gratified to notice that Dronov was growing less self-reliant, and that despondency was becoming apparent upon his emaciated, care-worn face. Into his shrill questions had come an irritated note and he laughed too long and too loud when Makarov, in explaining something to him, jested:

"Well now, Ivan, do you feel how sciences nurture youths?"

"But still, brethren of mine, what is the intelligentsia?" Ivan persisted in his questionings.

Clim answered professorially, using Tomilin's words:

"The intelligentsia: these are the best people of the land, people who have to answer for everything that is evil in it."

Makarov immediately caught him up:

"That means these are the righteous ones for whose sake God agreed to spare Sodom and Gomorrah, or something equally worthless? Such a rôle is not for me. No!"

"Well put," reflected Clim, and in order to have the last word himself, repeated Varavka's definition:

"There is also another view: the intelligent person is a highly qualified worker—and that's all!"

But again Makarov routed him:

"That sounds like Varavka's style," he commented.

9

Clim's hidden antipathy to Makarov increased daily. Makarov, whistling loudly and impudently, looked on him with the eyes of a man who has just come from a large city to a very small one, where he feels superior to rustic things. Frequently and easily he tossed off words and phrases no less interesting than Varavka's and Tomilin's. Clim tried desperately to develop in himself the ability to create original words, feeling that his own usually sounded like a dull echo of somebody else's. Clim had experienced the same frustration in describing things he had read. No matter how exactly he detailed a story, the brightness in it vanished in his telling; whereas Makarov could appropriate even the sayings of others and do it deftly.

One evening he and Makarov and Lidia were walking along together on their way to a piano recital. As they passed the Governor's palace, the doors opened and two dandies came out triumphantly escorting, half-carrying, a hideously fat old woman —the Governor's wife. Laboriously they lifted her up into her carriage.

Sighing, Makarov said to Lidia:

"Pushkin is right: 'The sweet attention of women is almost the sole aim of our efforts.'"

Lidia smiled, unwillingly enough; but Clim again felt the sting of envy.

He was irritated by the ambiguous actions of Lidia and Makarov. Here was something suspicious: Makarov, spoiled by the attention of the *gymnasium* girls, looked closely at Lidia with a seriousness unnatural to him, although he addressed her as mockingly as he did his other female admirers. As for Lidia, she plainly, sometimes even rudely, emphasized the fact that Makarov was displeasing to her. Despite this, Clim noticed that their accidental meetings were becoming more frequent; it seemed obvious that they came to Katin's parties for no other reason than to see one another.

He was strengthened in this belief by a strange scene that occurred in the city park. He had been sitting with Lidia on a bench in an alley of old linden trees. The shaggy sun was sinking into a chaos of blueish clouds, setting their ponderous magnificence on fire with a deep scarlet flame. Reddish-copper reflections rippled on the river; the smoke from the factory beyond the river turned ruddy; the panes of the kiosk in which ice-cream was sold flashed with vivid red-gold fires. A gentle autumn breeze blew lightly on Samghin's cheeks.

Clim felt tired and confused. The sunset-hued river reminded him of Boris' perishing; into his memory came an annoying echo:

"But was there really a boy? Perhaps there was no boy at all?"

He wanted very much to say something significant and amusing to Lidia. He had already made several attempts, but had failed to rouse the girl from her pensive mood. Her wide grey eyes were fixed on the dark scarlet clouds beyond the river. Clim suddenly remembered a legend which Makarov had told him.

"Do you know," he said, "Clement of Alexandria related that the angels, having come down from heaven, had affairs with the daughters of man."

Without moving her eyes from the distance, Lidia said listlessly:

"The compliment of a saint is cheap enough, to my way of thinking!"

Her indifference disturbed Clim. He became silent, wondering why this lanky inexperienced girl so often confused him, she was the only one who could confuse him.

Suddenly Makarov came up, in a tattered uniform, his cap pushed back on the nape of the neck, his boots down at the heels. He looked like a man who had just escaped from somewhere and was so weary that nothing really mattered.

"He puts his trust in his impudent face," Clim reflected.

Makarov silently extended his hand to Clim, waved it about in the air, then saluted Lidia, seriously, raising his fingers to his cap soldier fashion. He lit a cigarette and sat down on the bench beside Clim. After a moment he turned to Lidia and queried, jerking his head in the direction of the sunset:

"Beautiful?"

"The usual thing," she replied, then got up and started away.

"I am going to Alena's," she informed them.

When she had gone about twenty paces in her swinging walk Makarov said in a low voice:

"What a slender little thing. Like a needle! An odd family name that — Varavka."

Suddenly Lidia made a sharp turn, came back, and sat down on the bench again beside Clim.

"I've changed my mind."

Makarov straightened his cap, smiled, and bowed.

Something happened then that completely astounded Clim.

Makarov and Lidia started talking as if they had had a serious

quarrel with each other and were glad of this opportunity to renew the conflict. They glared at each other angrily; they spoke without any attempt to hide their intention of cutting each other to the quick.

"Only the beautiful pleases me," Lidia challenged. Makarov contradicted her mockingly:

"What in the world are you talking about! Is that quite enough?"

"Quite enough for beauty!"

Clim, seated between them began:

"Spencer defines beauty. . . ."

But they did not hear him. They jostled him, gesticulating, interrupting one another. Makarov, who had pulled off his cap, struck Clim's knee painfully with its brim. His streaked wispy hair stood out fiercely and gave his hump-nosed face a strange savage aspect unfamiliar to Clim. Lidia, tugging at the sleeve of Clim's coat, bared her teeth in an angry sneer. Red spots had flared up on her cheeks; her ears were scarlet; her hands trembled. Clim had never yet seen her so malevolent.

He felt himself in the debasing position of a man who was wholly ignored. Once or twice he decided to get up and go away; but he sat on, listening in amazement, to Lidia. She did not like to read books, so where did she get these ideas? Usually she said very little. She avoided disputes, and talked freely only with the beautiful Alena Telepneva and with Luba Somov. With them she conversed by the hour, telling them in a low voice, and with a wry face, about something evidently very mysterious. She regarded the *gymnasium* boys with disdain, nor did she bother to conceal it.

It seemed to Clim that she considered herself at least ten years older than her contemporaries, and ignored them accordingly. But with Makarov, who, in Clim's opinion, bore himself brazenly

toward her, she would dispute with an irritation approaching fury, as one disputes with an equal whom it is necessary to overcome and humble.

"Time to be going home, Lidia," Clim said angrily reminding her of his presence.

Lidia arose and straightened up militantly.

"Your attempts at being an original, Makarov, are unsuccessful," she spoke brusquely, but her voice was no longer harsh.

Makarov got up, too, made a bow, and brought the hand with the cap sweepingly to one side, after the manner of fourth-rate actors who portray French marquises.

In reply the girl merely raised her eyebrows. Then she turned away quickly, took Clim's arm, and went off with him.

"Why did you get so angry?" he asked.

She pushed back her hair which had come down over one ear, and stormed:

"I can't bear such — How do they call 'em? — Nihilists! He poses; he smokes. His hair is spotted and his nose is crooked. He is a filthy urchin — Is that the way to express it?"

But without waiting for a response she immediately commented on the good qualities of the man she had condemned:

"He skates magnificently!"

10

After this scene Clim felt something almost like respect for the girl; and also for her mind which he had so unexpectedly discovered. His feeling was increased by the consciousness of Lidia's mistrust, by the inattentive way she listened to him. Sometimes he feared that Lidia might be able to catch him at something, might be able to expose him in some way or other. He had long

since concluded that one's youthful contemporaries were more dangerous than their elders. They were craftier, more suspicious; whereas the conceit of the adults was bound up with simple-mindedness.

Although at times he was afraid of Lidia, Clim did not feel unfriendly toward her; on the contrary, the girl always aroused in him a desire to please her and to overcome her mistrust. He knew that he was not in love with her; he was still free from any desire to court girls, and sexual emotions did not disturb him very much. The numerous common affairs between *gymnasium* boys and girls only made him smile condescendingly. He considered such affairs impossible for himself, feeling that a youth who wore eyeglasses and who read serious books would be ridiculous in a lover's rôle. He had even stopped dancing, having decided that dancing was beneath his dignity. He was aloof with all the girls he knew, adopting the chill politeness Igor Turoboev used with them. When Alena Telepneva rapturously related how Luba Somov had been kissing Inokov, the telegraph operator, at the skating-ground, Clim maintained a pompous silence, fearing that otherwise he might be suspected of curiosity about romantic trifles. All the more cruelly was he stricken when he finally found himself in love.

It all began on a morning when, Clim, late for school, was rushing along through the thick turbidness of a February blizzard and suddenly, not far from the yellow *gymnasium* building, ran into Dronov. Ivan was standing on the curb, holding in one hand the end of a strap thrown over his back; the other hand, clutching a cap, hung down by his side.

"They've expelled me," he muttered. The snowflakes melting on his bare head and face looked like tears oozing out slowly from his forehead to his chin.

"What for?" Clim asked.

"The miserable, low-down swine!"

"Put on your cap," Clim advised him.

Ivan raised his hand slowly, as though the cap were of lead. Snow had fallen into it. Mechanically, he put it on his head, snow and all; but a moment later he took it off again, shook it out, and went on speaking in snatches:

"It's all Rzhiga. And the priest. I'm an 'evil influence,' 'twould seem. 'And in general,' say they, 'you, Dronov, are an accidental phenomenon and undesirable in the *gymnasium*'! They've been teaching me for six years—and now! . . . Tomilin has often told me that all the people on earth are but an accidental phenomenon!"

Clim strode homeward, shoulder to shoulder with Dronov, listening attentively but expressing neither wonder nor sympathy, while Dronov kept up a constant muttering; he groped for words, then spat them out viciously.

"They have taken my head off, the pigs! 'Evil influence'! It's simply because Rzhiga caught me kissing Marguerita!"

"Her?" Clim's tone was incredulous; he slowed down to look at Dronov.

"Well, yes—But he himself, this Rzhiga! . . ."

But Clim amazed and irritated, was not listening. He recalled Marguerita, a seamstress, round and pale of face, with dark shadows under her deep-set eyes. Her eyes were an indeterminate yellowish colour; she always looked tired and half-asleep. She must be nearly thirty years old, Clim thought. She sewed and mended his and his mother's linen, and Varavka's; she "worked out."

It was annoying to learn that even as far as women were concerned Dronov managed to get ahead of him.

"Well, what about her?" asked Clim, desirous of hearing more about Dronov and the seamstress.

"If only they wouldn't hand me walking papers!" mumbled Dronov.

"Does she let you?"

"Who?"

"Marguerita!"

Dronov twisted his shoulders impatiently as though pushing somebody away.

"Well, what woman won't let you?"

"And have you been going with her for long?" Clim persisted.

"Oh, leave me alone," growled Dronov. He turned a corner sharply and vanished in the white porridge of the snow.

II

Clim walked home meditatively. He could not believe that the modest seamstress would willingly kiss Dronov; it was more probable that he had been kissing her by force — and greedily, of course. Clim shuddered, imagining Dronov gulping and smacking his lips as he kissed.

At home, when he was taking off his things, he heard his mother in the parlour practising an unfamiliar piece.

"Why so early?"

Clim told her about Dronov and added:

"I did not go to classes; they are probably all stirred up. Ivan was an excellent student. He helped many of the others. He had quite a few friends."

"It was wise for you not to go," Clim's mother said. She had on a new blue negligée in which she looked unusually young and handsome. She bit her lip and glanced into a mirror.

"Stay with me for a bit," she suggested to her son, and pacing the room in a light, stately walk, she began talking very softly:

"Rzhiga warned me that it would be necessary to act sternly

with Ivan. He brought some sort of forbidden little book and indecent photographs to the classes. I told Rzhiga there was probably nothing serious about it all, that it was simply Dronov's boastfulness."

Clim gravely had his say:

"Yes — boastfulness, or that inclination toward revolvers which is so natural in children and adolescents."

"That is very apt," his mother praised him with a smile. "But the pernicious books along with the indecent little pictures — that certainly reveals a corrupt nature."

Rzhiga put it very well when he said that the purpose of the school is to develop people capable of adorning and enriching life in one way or another. Now, how could Dronov have adorned life?

Clim smiled.

"It seems so strange that Dronov and this dishevelled, half-witted Makarov should be your friends. You are so unlike them. You must know that I believe in your good sense and have no fear for you. I think that you are drawn toward them by their seeming talent. But I am convinced that their apparent talent is no more than mere liveliness and dexterity."

Clim nodded his head in assent; his mother's words delighted him. He knew that Makarov, Dronov, and some of the other *gymnasium* boys talked more cleverly than he; but he was positive that he was really more clever than they, not in words, but in some other more solid and deeper way.

"Of course, dexterity, too, is a useful quality, but a dubious one. It frequently turns into insincerity, to put it mildly," Clim's mother continued. What she said was more and more to Clim's liking. He got up, and clasped her closely around the waist, then suddenly released her and took away his hand. In that moment he sensed for the first time the woman in his mother. This so con-

fused him that he forgot the kind words he had wanted to say to her. He sidled away from her, but she placed her hands on his shoulders and drew him to her. She began to speak of Clim's father, and Varavka, and the reasons for her break with Clim's father.

"I should have told you of this a long time ago," she said, "but, knowing how observant and reflective you are, I thought it unnecessary."

Clim kissed her hand.

"Yes, mamma, it is unnecessary to speak of it. You know I respect Timophei Stepanovich very much."

He was living through an excitement which was new to him. Beyond the window the storm seethed noiselessly. In the soft colourless gloom of the room everything seemed plunged in pensiveness, seemed to have grown bleaker. Varavka liked paintings and china. After Clim's father had gone away the entire house had changed in character; it became more cosy, more beautiful, warmer. The graceful woman with the grave proud face now appeared to the youth nearer and dearer than he had ever known her before. She spoke with him as with an equal, with easy *camaraderie*. Even her voice sounded unusually soft and distinct.

"Lidia makes me uneasy," she said presently, walking in step with her son. "She isn't normal — a serious matter of heredity on her mother's side. Remember her affair with Turoboev? Of course that belongs to her childhood, but still. . . . And besides, my relations with her aren't what I'd like them to be."

Looking into her son's eyes, she asked, smiling:

"You're not in love with her? A little — yes?"

"No!" Clim answered firmly.

She talked on awhile about Lidia in a disapproving tone; then abruptly she asked him, pausing before a mirror as she spoke:

"Probably you are short of pocket money?"

"I have quite enough!"

"My dear fellow," said Clim's mother, embracing him and kissing his forehead, "at your age one need no longer be ashamed of certain desires."

Suddenly Clim understood the meaning of her question about money. He blushed deeply and could not think of anything to say to her.

12

After dinner he went into the mezzanine to see Dronov. Makarov was there; he stood leaning one shoulder against the tiled stove and exhaling streams of tobacco smoke toward the ceiling while he smoothed with a finger the dark shadows on his upper lip. Dronov, seated on the cot with his legs tucked under him like a tailor, was threatening shrilly:

"You all lie! I'll manage to crawl into the university in spite of everything!"

The door behind Clim opened again. Lidia stood at the threshold, frowning.

"Is this where they smoke fish?"

Dronov called out rudely:

"Shut the door—it isn't summer now!"

Makarov, silently bowing to the girl, lit a new cigarette from the stump of his old one.

"What vile tobacco!" Lidia said, crossing to the window, which was plastered over with snow. She stopped there, turned away from the others, and began questioning Dronov about his dismissal. Dronov's answers were angry and reluctant. Makarov, squinting through the veil of smoke, silently scrutinized the dark-brown little figure of the girl.

"Why do you, Ivan, give one such foolish books to read?"

Lidia changed the subject. "You gave Luba Somov *What Is to Be Done?* But it's the silliest of novels! I tried to read it and couldn't. The whole thing isn't worth even two pages of Turgeniev's *First Love.*"

"Maidens are fond of the sour-sweet," said Makarov. As if ashamed of his unsuccessful sally, he began to blow hard at the ashes of his cigarette. Lidia made no answer. Clim perceived her desire to flick somebody upon the raw, and suddenly felt himself the victim when she said challengingly:

"A man who concedes a woman to another is, of course, nothing but an old rag!"

Clim adjusted his eye-glasses and began pedantically:

"However, if we take Hertzen's history of the relations between . . ."

"The spellbinder, *From Yonder Shore?*" Lidia asked. Makarov burst out laughing. He crushed his cigarette against the stove tile and threw the burned-out stump toward the door.

"What amuses you so much?" the girl flashed at him and within a few minutes the scene that Clim had witnessed in the city park was re-enacted before him. But this time Makarov and Lidia were even more bitter.

As he listened closely to their dispute Clim observed that, though they were shouting words that were familiar to him, the words were used loosely, their connotations disregarded, and their meanings perverted by each of the disputants according to his or her own desire. Makarov's quick gestures reminded Clim of the convulsive flashing of the drowning Boris Varavka's hands. Lidia's face, with its great eyes, became that new, unfamiliar face that always vaguely disturbed him.

"No — they're not in love with each other," reflected Samghin. "They're not in love with each other — that's evident!"

Dronov, swaying slowly to and fro on the cot, occasionally

glanced at the disputants with his darting eyes. From time to time his flat face would twist into a condescending little sneer.

Suddenly Lidia jumped up from her chair and went out, banging the door hard. Makarov wiped his perspiring forehead with his palm and heaved a weary sigh:

"She's angry."

As he lit a cigarette, he added:

"She's clever. Well, see you again!"

Dronov smiled after him, and slumped sideways onto the cot.

"They're posing, pretending," he said softly, with his eyes shut. Then he asked Clim, who was sitting at a table:

"Lidia, now — Did you hear her? That was a pretty challenge she threw him! 'There is no mercy in love'! Wasn't it now? She'll turn many a head!"

Dronov's coarse tone had ceased to arouse Clim's indignation since the time when Makarov had explained it:

"Vanka is really a good soul. He says rude things only because he doesn't dare to speak otherwise; he's afraid it would sound silly. His coarseness is, in his case, the sign of his trade, just like the idiotic helmet the firemen wear."

Listening to the howling of the blizzard in the chimney, Dronov went on in the same tiresome voice:

"I have a friend, a telegraph operator — he's teaching me to play chess. He plays famously. He isn't old yet — about forty years or something like that — but he's as bald as this stove, now. He told me about women: 'Out of politeness we say *baba* [country wife], but if one were to speak honestly, she's only a *raba* [bondswoman]. According to the law of being she is supposed to give birth, but she prefers to play the strumpet for all she is worth.'"

He leapt from the cot suddenly, as if he had been stung, and pounded the wall with his fist.

"You lie, you devils! I'll get into the university! Tomilin has promised to help me!"

When he had listened patiently for a while to Dronov cursing out Rzhiga and the teachers, Clim asked carelessly:

"Well, how did all this come about with you and Marguerita?"

"How did what come about?" Dronov had not answered at once.

"Well, now, this—love?"

"Love," repeated Dronov thoughtfully, with his head bowed. "Why it just up and happened. At first we kissed each other, and then everything else. This, brother, is just a lot of piffle!"

He began to talk about the *gymnasium* again. Clim listened awhile, and then left without having found out what he wanted to know.

IV

I

HE found himself enslaved to thoughts about Lidia and Makarov, Varavka and his mother, and Dronov and the seamstress. But it seemed to him these unshakable thoughts were aroused only by curiosity and not by anything else. It was too humiliating to think that there existed between people certain relations and states of feeling which were beyond his comprehension. His mind was filled with thoughts about women. In them was concentrated everything real and important to him; all else had receded to a place of minor significance from which it gradually faded into the strange character of half-dream, half-reality.

Vaguely as in a half-dream, too, he was conscious of the noisy life going on in Katin's wing of the house. A certain long-haired man had appeared there, with a thin, pale and immobile face. He was not in the least like a *mouzhik,* yet he was clad, *mouzhik* fashion, in a grey *kaftan,* or long peasant overcoat of homespun cloth, heavy felt boots that reached up to his knees, and a warm blue blouse and trousers of the same material. He brandished his thin arms frequently, or clasped them to his sunken chest. He held his head stiffly, as if some one had given him a hard blow on the chin, after which he, having jerked his head up thus, was no longer able to lower it and was forever compelled to look upward. He urged people to renounce the corrupt life of the city, to retreat into the villages and till the earth.

"Old stuff!" scoffed the man who looked like a wet-nurse, making a gesture of refusal. The writer echoed him:

"We tried it. We burned our fingers!"

The man who was disguised as a *mouzhik* spoke in the tone of a preacher in his pulpit:

"Ye blind ones! Ye did go thither with avaricious thoughts, with a preachment of evil and force; I summon ye to a work of weal and of love. I say in the sacred words of my teacher: Become simple, be ye children of the earth, cast away all the spangled falsehood which ye have invented, and which maketh ye blind."

From the corner where the stove was came the sound of Tomilin's voice:

"You would have the jewellers forge plough-shares? But wouldn't such a reversion to simplicity be a reversion to savagery?"

Clim caught the louder note in the teacher's voice; his words had a more assured and a harsher sound. His face, paler than ever, was becoming more and more overgrown with hair. His frock was rubbed ragged at the elbows; on the rear of his trousers was sewn a dark-grey triangular patch. The nose in his emaciated face had become sharper. Smiling wryly, he often shook his head, and then his red hair, tumbling down on his cheeks, became entangled with the hair of his beard. Using both hands he patiently pushed the unkempt locks behind his ears. More calmly than anybody else he argued with the man who was dressed up as a *mouzhik,* and with another man — bald and red-faced — who asserted that the only way to salvation for the people was in cheese-dairying and bee-keeping.

Clim was depressed by the speakers' numerous contradictions and the stubbornness with which each of them defended his own truth. The man who was dressed as a *mouzhik* spoke with aus-

tere and apostolic assurance of Tolstoi and of the two visages of Christ — the churchly and the popular; about Europe, which was perishing from an excess of sensuality and a poverty of spirit; about the delusions of science. He particularly despised science.

"In it are hidden the foundations of all our delusions; in it is a venom which disrupts the soul!"

From the divan, whose bast stuffing protruded like a beard from the torn upholstery, there would jump up a little wiry-haired man in *pince-nez*. In a bass which drowned all the other voices he shouted:

"Barbarity!"

"Exactly," agreed the writer.

Tomilin looked incredulous.

"Can it really be that you deem it possible and salutary for us to revert to the Chaldaean shepherds' conception of the universes?"

"The peasant handicraftsman! Switzerland — there's a country!" In a hoarse voice the bald-headed man tried to convince the writer's wife. "Stock-raising. Cheese, butter, leather, honey, lumber! Be rid of the factories!"

The mighty bass of the man in *pince-nez* dominated the chaos of shouts and speeches. He also was a writer; he compiled popular, instructive pamphlets. He was so small that his enormous head with its strands of dark hair reaching to his narrow shoulders looked as if it belonged to someone else. The pale face squeezed in between his shocks of black hair seemed only faintly sketched in. His whole person bore an unfinished aspect. But his deep bass voice had an unbelievable power and, as water quenches embers, it easily drowned all shouts. He would jump out into the middle of the room, swaying like a drunken sailor as he described circles and ellipses in the air with his arms, and discourse about apes, prehistoric man, and the mechanism of the universe with as much

assurance as if he himself had created the universe, had sowed the milky way upon it, placed the constellations in their places, lit the sun, and swung the planets into motion. Everybody listened attentively, and Dronov, his mouth eagerly open, fixed his eyes intently upon the orator's indistinct face as if he expected that at any minute something would be said that would solve all questions forever.

The face of the man dressed like a *mouzhik* remained immobile, its expression becoming still more stony as the speech progressed. When it came to an end he began immediately in his pulpit manner:

"Although from the oldest times astronomers have been celebrated for their conjectures about the mysteries of the heavens, they inspire nothing but horror, to say nothing of the fact that the existence of a spirit that has created everything substantial is denied by them. . . ."

"Not by all," put in Tomilin, "take Flammarion . . ."

Disregarding the interruption, the Tolstoian proceeded to draw an eerie picture: an infinite, mute darkness; in it, "like golden worms, milky ways tremble and writhe; universes arise and vanish." This was rather skillful, thought Clim.

"And amid the innumerable accumulation of stars pricked into the unconquerable darkness, this insignificant earth of ours is lost, this vale of sorrows and sufferings. Come, then — just picture it, and the horror of your solitude, the horror of your insignificance in the black void, amid the furiously flaming suns condemned to be extinguished."

Clim heard these horrors to the end rather calmly, but occasionally a disagreeable little chill quivered across his back. The speakers' manner interested him more than the matter. He had heard the large-headed writer speak rapturously of the mechanism of the universe; but the man who had dressed himself up as a

mouzhik depicted the horror of the earth's isolation in the universe with equal delectation.

These speeches had a powerful effect on Dronov. He would huddle up, shivering, as if in a chill, and whisper to Clim or Makarov:

"Which one of them do you think is right—eh?"

He scratched his left eyebrow nervously with a fingernail and grumbled:

"Y-yes, it's the devil and all! One must study. One can't get far with the copper coins of knowledge the *gymnasium* gives one."

Makarov was not satisfied, either, by the disputes that went on at Katin's.

"They know a lot and know how to say it, and all this is significant; but although they do give light, they give no warmth. And—all this is not the main thing."

Dronov asked quickly:

"But what is the main thing?"

"That's a foolish question, Ivan," Makarov replied with vexation. "If I knew that I would be the sagest of the sages."

2

Late at night, after the protracted battle of words, the three of them went to escort Tomilin, and Dronov put his question to him:

"Who is right?"

Tomilin walked along slowly, looking up at the stars. He spoke reluctantly:

"This question is out of place, Ivan. You have here the inevitable collision of two habits of thought about the universe. These habits have been with us from of old and are perfectly irrecon-

cilable; they shall always separate men into the idealists and the materialists. Who is right? Materialism is simpler, more practical and more optimistic; idealism is beautiful, but sterile. It is aristocratic; it demands more of man. In all systems of thought about the universe there are hidden, more or less skillfully, elements of pessimism; there are more of them in idealism than in the system opposed to it."

After a silence during which his pace slackened almost to a standstill, he said:

"I am not a materialist. But neither am I an idealist. While all these people . . ."

He made a quick gesture over his shoulder.

"They are poorly educated. For that reason they are believers. They repeat ancient thoughts crudely. Of course, every idea has an indubitable value. When one considers it seriously, an idea, even if it isn't clearly formulated, can prove the inciting agent of an endless series of others. Like a star, it scatters its rays in all directions. But the absolute, pure value of thought vanishes immediately when the process of its practical exploitation commences. Hats, umbrellas, nightcaps, eye-glasses, and syringes — these things are derived out of pure thought through the strength of our longing for calm, orderliness, and equilibrium."

Halting, he pointed backward over his shoulder.

"Although Byron wrote verse, still one not infrequently comes across the most profound thoughts in him. One of such thoughts is: 'The thinker is less real than his thought.' They, over there, do not know that."

He ended wearily, half-angrily: "Man is a thinking organ of nature; he has no other significance. By means of man, matter strives to come to a full knowledge of its own self. In that is everything."

When they had reached Tomilin's rooms and had bidden him farewell, Dronov said:

"He has begun to put on airs, as if he had been inducted into the ranks of the archpriests. And yet there's a patch on his trousers."

3

All these thoughts, words, impressions reached Clim's consciousness indirectly through something else. His memory, as though striving to free itself from a superfluous burden of monotonous pictures, was importunately resurrecting them. It was as if memory, with a mysterious power, was growing up like a bush bursting into full bloom, to look upon which was a bit shameful, but curiously pleasant. He had seen what he considered an amazing number of those things which are deemed indecent and shameless. He had but to shut his eyes for a moment and he saw the shapely legs of Alena Telepneva when she had fallen while skating; he saw the bare breasts, that were like cantaloupes, of the sleeping chambermaid; his mother on Varavka's knee; the writer Katin kissing the chubby knees of his half-dressed wife as she sat on a table.

The writer's wife, mute and as softly bland as a cat, poured the tea for their evening guests. Every year she was pregnant. This at first had repulsed Clim. He felt squeamish about it and agreed with Lidia that there was something filthy about pregnant women. But after he had seen her with her knees bare and her face intoxicated with joy, this woman who smiled to everybody with monotonous kindness awoke in him curiosity in which there was no place for fastidiousness.

Even her large-nosed sister, who solicitously looked after the guests, like a chambermaid on trial who must needs please her masters—even this girl, as nondescript as Tanya Kulikova, at-

tracted Clim's attention by her full bosom that was covered tightly by her bright calico shirt waist. Clim had once heard the writer Katin shout at her:

"I'm not to blame because nature has created maidens who can't do anything — who can't even pickle mushrooms!"

At that time his rooster-like shout had seemed funny to Clim. But now the large-nosed maiden with blackheads on her face seemed to him unfairly treated, even likeable — and that not merely because insignificant people were in general agreeable and never bothered him with questions or demands.

One evening Clim took the new issue of a journal to the writer's rooms. Katin met him, waving a crumpled letter, joyously shouting:

"Do you know, young man, that within two or three weeks your uncle will arrive here from his exile? At last, bit by bit, the old eagles are flocking together!"

A crackling sounded behind them. Through the crack of a barely opened door the frightened face of the writer's spouse was thrust out.

"It's begun," she said, and immediately vanished.

"My wife's giving birth. Wait a little while — she does that rather fast with me!" Katin snatched the cheap little bronze lamp from the table and disappeared through the narrow door, which had been papered over. Clim was left in the company of half a dozen Vienna chairs, at a small table piled up with books and newspapers. A larger table filled the centre of the room. On it an extinguished samovar reared up out of a litter of unwashed dishes. At one side lay a double-barrelled gun that had been taken apart. A black divan leaned against the wall, wisps of stuffing sticking out all over it, and above it hung portraits of Chernyshevski and Nekrassov. In a gold frame was a picture of the corpulent Hertzen sitting with his legs crossed. Beside him was the stern,

bearded face of Saltykov. Clim sensed in all this a dismal poverty; not the kind of poverty which kept the writer from paying his rent on time, but another kind that was hopeless, frightening, and very touching. After ten minutes had passed the writer rushed out, sat down at a corner of the table, and bragged:

"She gives birth with remarkable ease, but the children don't live!"

Then he leaned forward, resting his hand on the table, and resumed in a low, hurried voice his interrupted conversation about Clim's uncle.

"Jacob Samghin is one of those seamen of the ship of Russian history who fill its sails with their own energy in order to hasten the passage of the ship to the shores of liberty and truth."

Subsequently he referred to Jacob Samghin as a helmsman, a smith, an apostle. "They are flocking—the eagles are flocking!" he repeated animatedly as he jumped up and disappeared behind the door from whence were issuing louder and louder moans. Clim left quickly, fearing that the writer would want to discuss his story, printed in the journal Clim had brought. The story was no better than Katin's other works. Childishly simple-hearted *mouzhiks* were depicted in it. They, as always, were awaiting the coming of God's truth; this had been promised them by the village schoolmaster, a man of sincere thoughts, who was persecuted by two enemies: a pitiless village skinflint and a crafty priest.

4

At home Clim informed his mother of his uncle's return. She threw a questioning glance at Varavka, who bent his head over his plate and said indifferently:

"Yes, yes, these people whom history has ordered to put in their applications for retirement are gradually returning from their

'far travels.' There are three working in my office. I must admit that they are excellent workers."

"But. . . ." Clim's mother hesitated.

"I'll talk about this later," said Varavka.

Clim understood that Varavka did not want to talk about it before him. He considered this tactless and looked questioningly at his mother, but did not catch her eye. She was watching Varavka as he, tired and dishevelled, hungrily devoured ham. Presently Rzhiga arrived, and after him, the advocate. Clim's mother and the two men played almost until midnight. Clim thought their music more intoxicatingly splendid than ever before. It put him in such a lyric mood that when he kissed his mother's hand on saying goodnight, he gave way to an emotion completely new to him and whispered:

"My own, my dear!"

His mother clasped him closely to her, silently stroked his cheek, and kissed his forehead with warm lips.

As he lay down in his bed he was again obsessed by that overwhelming curiosity about life. He recalled a recent conversation with Makarov. When Clim had informed him of the affair between Dronov and the seamstress, Makarov had muttered:

"So that's how! The animal!"

He had said these five words without annoyance or envy, without disgust or amazement, and in such a tone that the last two words sounded superfluous. Then he had smiled and told Clim:

"My landlord, a postman, is learning to play a fiddle because he loves his dear mamma and doesn't want to make her feel bad by marrying. 'A wife is, after all, a stranger,' says he. 'Of course I'll marry; but only after my dear mamma has passed away.' Every Saturday he visits a bawdyhouse, and after that, the baths. He's been practicing zealously for the last five years, but only exercises. He feels certain that unless he has played through all

exercises it would be harmful both for the ear and hand to play real pieces."

Makarov became silent and frowned.

"What are you driving at?" Clim asked.

"I don't know exactly," Makarov answered, scrutinizing the smoke from his cigarette. "It has some connection with Vanka Dronov. Though Vanka is probably lying, and has no affair of any sort. Still, it's true that he's been selling dirty photographs."

He shook his head and continued balefully:

"An asinine mood. Everything is unimportant except one thing. One feels himself, not a human being, but merely one of the organs of a human being. It is offensive and repulsive; as though a certain instructor were instilling into you: You are a rooster; therefore betake yourself to the hens designated for you! But I—I want, and yet do not want, the hen. I don't want to be playing any exercises. You who are a clever fellow—Do you feel like that, too?"

"No!" lied Clim resolutely.

They were silent for a while. Makarov slumped forward in his chair, his head bowed low. Clim looked at him intently and asked:

"How, then, do you regard women?"

"With the fear of God," said Makarov glumly. He got up and seized his cap.

"Well, I must be going!"

As he thought of Makarov's distress, Clim began to blame Tomilin. This man must know. Why didn't he say something reassuring, something that would solve the mystery and banish shame and fear? Several times Clim had cautiously—even as had Makarov insistently and harshly—tried to start a conversation about women with the teacher. But Tomilin was so strangely deaf to their attempts that once Clim had remarked angrily to Dronov:

"He's pretending, the red-haired devil!"

"He must have burned himself," Dronov said, smiling. This sly smile of Dronov's brought back to Clim's mind the scene in the garden, and urged him on to the suspicion: "Can it be that Dronov saw it all — that he knows about it?"

Once, however, yielding to the obstinate attack of Makarov, the teacher said casually without looking at the young men:

"Of women one must speak in verses; without seasoning, this food is not palatable. I do not like verses."

Raising his eyes up to the ceiling he advised:

"Read Schopenhauer's *The Metaphysics of Love*. In it you will find everything that you need. *The Kreutzer Sonata* of Tolstoi serves as a fairly good illustration to it."

5

The three of them visited Tomilin less and less frequently. They found him, usually, with a book, leaning his elbows against the table, his hands against his ears. Sometimes he lay on the cot with his legs drawn up, holding the book on his knees, a pencil stuck in his mouth. He never answered a knock at the door, even if it were repeated three or four times.

"I'm not a woman," he explained, then added: "I am not in the nude," and, after a moment's reflection, "I'm not married."

Pacing the floor, he instructed them:

"In the world of ideas it is necessary to distinguish two classes: those persons who seek, and those who hide themselves. For the first it is necessary to find an exact path to truth, no matter where it leads, even though into an abyss, to the destruction of the seeker. The second desire only to hide themselves and their fear of life, their ignorance of its mysteries — to hide in a convenient idea. A Tolstoian is a comic type, but he, in quite a finished

manner, furnishes us with an illustration of people who hide themselves."

Clim saw that Makarov, bent over, was watching the teacher's feet as if he were waiting for the moment when Tomilin would stumble — waiting impatiently; demandingly and loudly putting his questions, as though he wanted to awaken one fallen asleep. But he received no answer.

Listening to the calm reflective voice of the teacher, scrutinizing him, Clim conjectured: What sort of woman would it be who was capable of falling in love with Tomilin? Probably some homely, insignificant woman, like Tanya Kulikova or the sister of Katin's wife, who had given up all hopes of love. But these reflections did not interfere with Clim's catching the coppery paradoxes and aphorisms.

"The path to true faith lies through a desert of unbelief," he heard. "Faith, as a habit of convenience, is incomparably more harmful than doubt. It is admissible that faith in its more vivid manifestations is not a normal emotion — is perhaps even a psychic ill. We see those who have faith among the hysterics, among the fanatics, like Savonarola or the archpresbyter Avvacum.[11] At the best, these are feebleminded, as, for instance, St. Francis of Assisi."

Occasionally Dronov would put questions of a social character; but the teacher either did not answer them at all or did so unwillingly and incomprehensibly. Of all his speeches Clim had remembered only one judgment:

"It is erroneous to think that the energy of men united in an organization, in a party, is increased in its force. On the contrary: in placing their desires, their hopes, their responsibility upon a leader, men, through that very thing, lower both the temperature and the stature of their personal energies. The ideal embodiment of energy is Robinson Crusoe."

Makarov was always the first to weary of these discursions.

"Well, it's time for us to be going," he would say, brusquely. Tomilin would shake hands with them. His hand was warm and moist. He smiled absent-mindedly and never invited them to call on him again. Makarov was becoming increasingly discourteous to Tomilin. Once, as they were descending the stairs from the teacher's room, Makarov said, with a loudness that seemed intentional:

"That red-headed fellow reminds me of a tarantula. I have never seen one, but Horizontov's ancient *Natural History* says: 'Tarantulas are useful when soaked in oil; they serve as the best remedy for the bites which they themselves inflict.'"

Dronov laughed sourly at the malicious jest. Clim was still thinking about it when he reached home. As he came in he suddenly heard in the parlour a curious hurried rustling and a soft strumming of strings, as if Rzhiga's violoncello, having rested, were recalling its evening's song and attempting to repeat it for its own benefit. This thought, flashing through Clim's mind, gave way to fright before the incomprehensible. He listened breathlessly. It was clear that the sounds were coming from the parlour and not from the room above it where Lidia sometimes played the piano late at night.

Clim lit a candle, picked up a dumbbell, and went into the parlour. His knees shook. The violoncello was sounding louder; the rustling was more audible. Suddenly a wave of relief came over him: There was probably a mouse in the instrument! He put it down carefully with its upper board to the floor and a tiny young mouse, as small as a black cockroach, rolled out from under it.

A shining streak of light streamed from his mother's bedroom into her dark study.

"She isn't asleep yet. I'll tell her about the mouse," Clim decided.

But when he reached the open door of the bedroom he staggered back. The glow of the night lamp fell on his mother's face and bare arm; the arm encircled Varavka's hairy neck. His dishevelled head was pressed to her shoulder. She was lying with her face up, her mouth slightly open; evidently fast asleep. Varavka snored fitfully. For some reason he seemed smaller than he was in the daytime. There was something shameful, yet poignant, about it all.

Clim returned to his room and went to bed, deeply agitated. His confused mind set up its imagery. One after the other there floated through the darkness the figures of plump Luba Somov and of Alena Telepneva, the beauty, with her capriciously turned-up lip, her bold blue eyes, her indolent movements, and her rich, imperious voice. But the familiar figure of Lidia eclipsed the others. Thinking of her, Clim became lost in a maze of complex emotions. He realized that Lidia was not beautiful, that she was often very disagreeable; but he felt an unconquerable attraction toward her. His night thoughts about girls were assuming a palpable character. They aroused in his body a strange disquieting tension that recalled a terrifying book he had read—a book on the pernicious effects of onanism, written by Professor Tarnovsky, which his mother had casually put in his way a long time ago. Jumping out of bed, he lit the lamp, and snatched up a little book by Menshikov, *Concerning Love*. The book proved boresome. It had no reference to the emotion that was disturbing Samghin. Outside the window the wind was shaking the trees. The rustling of their leaves brought a picture of the flight of countless flocks of birds, of the rustling of skirts in a dance, and of the *soirées* at the *gymnasium*, which Rzhiga arranged.

6

Clim fell asleep at dawn. He awoke late, fatigued and listless. It was Sunday. Late mass was already drawing to a close; the bells were ringing. An April rain was lashing outside the window; the metal of the waterspout gave forth a monotonous sound. Clim reflected dismally:

"Can it be that I must go through the disgusting thing that Makarov is experiencing?"

It was now impossible to think of Makarov without thinking of Lidia. In Lidia's presence Makarov became excited. His voice was louder, his words more bold and mocking than ever. But at the same time his harsh face softened and a gayer sparkle played in his eyes.

"Is it true that they want to expel Makarov from the *gymnasium* for drinking?" Lidia had asked him casually, but Clim had known that her indifference was assumed.

His door opened cautiously and the new chambermaid walked in. She was stout and stupid, with an upturned nose and colourless eyes.

"Your mother wants to know — Do you want to have coffee? Because we're goin' to have breakfast soon."

Her white apron was drawn tightly over her bosom. Clim reflected that her breasts must be as firm and coarse as her calves.

"I'm not going to drink any coffee," he answered angrily. He had suddenly decided that Lidia's affair with Makarov was sillier than the usual affairs between *gymnasium* boys and girls, and asked himself:

"Maybe I am not in love at all, but have yielded unconsciously to an atmosphere of amorousness and have only imagined everything I feel?"

But this conjecture, instead of calming him, served only to remind him of the tipsy Makarov's half-witted chatter when, swaying in his chair, trying to comb with his fingers his unruly bicoloured locks, he had stammered out thickly with his drink-sodden tongue:

"Physiology teaches that only nine of our organs are in a state of progressive development, and that we have organs which are dying out, which are rudimentary — d'you understand? Maybe physiology lies? And maybe we also have dying-out emotions. Just imagine that the yearning toward woman is a dying-out emotion — Is that why it is so painful, so compelling, eh? Just imagine that a man wants to live in accordance with Tomilin's theory, eh? The brain, the depository of the investigative creative spirit — may the devil take it! — is already beginning to understand love as being a prejudice, eh? And perhaps onanism, sodomy, are essentially a striving for freedom from woman? Well, now? What d'you think?"

He had put these questions at a time when Clim had not yet been disturbed by such things, and his comrade's drunken talk had aroused only a feeling of revulsion in him. But now the words "freedom from woman" seemed not at all foolish to him. And it was almost pleasant to remind himself that Makarov was drinking more and more, even though he was becoming apparently more calm, and at times so deeply sunk in thought that it seemed as if he had been suddenly stricken by blindness and deafness. Clim had noticed that Makarov, when he lit a cigarette, did not put out the match, but carefully allowed it to burn out in the ash-tray to the very end, or waited until it burned to the end in his fingers, carefully holding it by its burned end. The frequently scorched skin on two of his fingers had grown dark and hardened, like a locksmith's.

Clim did not ask him why he did this. He preferred to observe,

without questioning, remembering Dronov's unsuccessful attempts and Varavka's pointed words:

"Fools ask questions more often than do men of really searching minds."

Now Makarov was dragging about with him a book by some anonymous author, entitled *The Triumph of Woman*. He sang its praises so ardently and eloquently that Clim had taken the fat little book and read it through attentively, but had failed to find in it anything remarkable. Its author dully recounted the loves of Ovid and Corinne, of Petrarch and Laura, of Dante and Beatrice, of Boccaccio and Fiammetta. The book was filled with prosy translations of elegies and sonnets. Clim wondered what there was in it that had so infatuated his comrade. Finally he asked Makarov about it.

"Didn't you understand?" the latter asked in amazement. He opened the book and read one of the first phrases of the author's introduction:

"'The victory over idealism was at the same time a victory over woman.' There is a truth for you! The height of culture is determined by the attitude toward woman—do you understand?"

Clim nodded his head. Then, as he looked at Makarov's harsh face, at his handsome, bold eyes, the conviction came to him that it was the cynical licentiousnesses of Ovid and Boccaccio, not the stories of Dante and Petrarch, that made *The Triumph of Woman* so interesting to Makarov. Undoubtedly this book was the one thing necessary to influence Lidia in a certain way.

"How simple it all is, really," he reflected, looking with lowered eyebrows at Makarov, who was talking animatedly about troubadours, tourneys, duels.

7

When Clim came into the dining-room his mother was bent over a window, trying unsuccessfully to open it, while in the middle of the room stood a poorly dressed man in dirty, long boots that reached to his knees. He stood with his head thrown back, his mouth open, while he poured onto his tongue, which was thrust out and curved like a little boat, a white powder from a paper.

"This is Uncle Jacob," his mother informed him. "Please open the window!"

Clim walked up to his uncle, made a bow, and held out his hand; then let it drop. Jacob Samghin, holding in one hand a glass of water, with the fingers of the other hand was rolling the wrapper into a little ball. As he licked his lips, his glittering grey eyes under their swollen lids looked into his nephew's face. He took a swallow of water, put the tumbler down on the table, and threw the paper ball on the floor. Then, pressing his nephew's hand between his own, dark and bony, he asked dully:

"Is this the second one? Clim? But what of Dmitri? Aha! A student? Taking up natural history, of course? Speak louder—I'm growing deaf from quinine," Jacob Samghin warned Clim as he sat down at the table. He pushed aside his service with his elbow, and described a circle with his finger on the table cloth.

"That means you no longer have secret meeting-rooms? How about secret circles—Are there none of them? That's strange. What do they do now, if that's the case?"

Clim's mother shrugged her shoulders and contracted her eyebrows into a black line. Without waiting for her answer, Samghin said to Clim:

"You are wondering? You haven't seen such fellows? I,

brother, have lived for twenty years in Tashkente, and in the Semipalatinskaya district, among people who might be called savages. Yes. I, at your age, was called *L'homme qui rit.*"

Clim noticed that his uncle pronounced *l'homme,* "*L'iëm.*"

"I dug ditches. On the Arikas. You'll find fever there, brother."

As he looked about the dining-room, Clim's uncle rubbed his cheek.

"Hm. Ivan has grown rich. How did he manage it? Is he in trade?"

He glanced about the room again, disparagingly.

"Just like a buffet lunch, in a railway terminal."

He brought with him into the dining-room a smell of fusty leather. A worn drab coat, open at the chest, hung from his bony shoulders. It revealed a greyish blouse of coarse linen. On his wrinkled neck, under his sharp dewlap, a red silk kerchief, old and split at the creases, was twisted like a rope. His face, of an earthy hue; the grey sparse needles of his clipped mustaches; his bare, sooty skull, with remnants of curly hair on the nape of his neck behind the dark leathery ears — all these made him resemble both an old soldier and an ancient unfrocked monk. But his teeth had a white and youthful gleam, and the glance of his grey eyes was keen. The absent-minded stare of those red-rimmed eyes under the thick eyebrows and deeply wrinkled forehead seemed to Clim the gaze of a man half-insane. All in all, his uncle was a depressing chance-comer, a stranger. In his presence even the dining-room furniture lost its solid appearance, the pictures looked faded. Other things in the room seemed to become more ponderous, superfluous, and confining. Clim's uncle shot out questions like an examiner. Clim's mother was agitated. Her answers were short, crisp, a bit defiant.

"Well, now, what sorts of circles have you in your *gymnasium?*"

Clim being but poorly informed, answered hesitatingly but respectfully, as if he were addressing Rzhiga:

"Tolstoians. Then there are the economists. There aren't many circles."

"Tell me all about them!" commanded his uncle. "Are the Tolstoians a sect? I heard that they found colonies in villages." He shook his head sadly and went on:

"Such things used to be. We went through all that. For, you see, I know the sectarians. I was a propagandist among the Molokans in the Saratovskaya province. They do say that 'Stepniak' wrote about me — Kravchniski, d'you know him? 'Gussev' — that's who I am."

Clim was relieved to find that his uncle, though he asked questions, did not expect any answers. But in the matter of the Tolstoians his questioning became more persistent:

"Well, now, what are they doing? Well, there are the colonies; but what comes after that?"

Clim glanced out of the corner of his eye at his mother, who was sitting near the window. He felt like asking why breakfast wasn't being served. But his mother was gazing fixedly out of the window. Then, becoming confused, he told his uncle that there was a writer living in the wing of the house who would be in a better position to tell him about the Tolstoians and about everything else than he, Clim, could; he was so taken up with studying, that. . . .

"Studying didn't interfere with us," his uncle reproachfully remarked, and began asking him about the writer.

"Katin? Don't know him."

He approved the fact that the writer lived under the supervision of the police. He smiled.

"Aha! That means he's one of the honest ones. In my time the following wrote honestly: Omulevski, Nephedov, Bozhin,

Staniukovich, Zasodimski; there was Levitov, too, but that fellow was a chatterbox. And Sleptzov, but he wrote all sorts of hodge-podge. Then there was Uspenski. There were two of them—those Uspenskis. One was more lively, the other was just so-so, with a sort of little sneer about him."[12]

After a moment's silence he questioned Clim's mother:

"I had forgotten. Ivan wrote me that he had separated from you. With whom are you living, Vera? Eh? A rich fellow, evidently? A lawyer, or something? Aha! An engineer? A Liberal? Hm. . . . And Ivan is in Germany, you say? But why not Switzerland? He's taking a cure? Only taking a cure? He was rather a healthy fellow. But he wasn't strong in his principles. Everybody knows that."

He spoke loudly, like a deaf man; his rather hoarse voice had an imperious ring. Clim's mother's brief answers were also becoming constantly louder; a few moments more, it seemed, and she, too, would begin to shout.

"How old are you—thirty-five or seven? Rather youngish!" Jacob Samghin became silent. He took a powder from his coat pocket, swallowed it, and chased it down with water. Then he set the tumbler on the table and turned to Clim.

"Well, now, lead me to the writer. In my time writers meant something, after all."

As he walked through the yard Uncle Jacob looked slowly about him like a man trying to recall something long forgotten.

"The house—Is it Ivan's own?"

"It's grandfather's. But Varavka bought it."

"Who?"

Clim did not know what to say. His uncle, glancing at Clim's face, answered for him:

"I understand. The man your mother lives with. But why are you upset? It is an everyday occurrence. The women love it—

this pomp, and everything of that sort. What a dude you are, brother," he suddenly concluded.

8

Katin met Samghin reverently, as one meets a hero, and in raptures, like a youth. Smiling and bowing, he extended both hands to Samghin and spoke swiftly:

"I caught sight of you from the window and felt instantly: 'Tis he! Sarakhanov wrote to me from Saratov. . . ."

Uncle Jacob, smiling, glanced about the humble room, and Clim saw at once that he approved of it. His dark wrinkled face seemed to grow younger, almost radiant.

"Well, well," he said, seating himself on the decrepit divan, "so that's the way of things. Yes. There are some people in Saratov. In Samara there are some queer folks—I can't get the hang of them. Simbirsk is like an uninhabited hut."

He mentioned several other cities on the shores of the Volga and finally asked:

"Well, and how is everything with you? Speak louder and not too quickly. I hear badly; the quinine is making me deaf." Then, as if he did not expect to be understood, he lifted his hands and shook the lobes of his ears. Clim reflected that these sunburned, dark ears must crackle when one touched them.

The writer started to talk about the life of the intelligentsia, hesitantly, as if he were afraid he might be accused of something. He smiled confusedly and spread his hands in a gesture of apology. He enumerated his friends, a long list of names but vaguely familiar to Clim, and of the last one he added sadly:

"This chap also works in the county government office; he's a statistician."

"In the county government office—that's a good thing," approved Uncle Jacob, "but it's not enough."

Then, fingering the fold of skin under his chin, he said with a sigh:

"You've become savages!"

"It's called enlightenment now," Katin explained in embarrassment. "There's even a story on the theme of a betrayal of the past. They call it just that in the title: *He Has Grown Enlightened*. Boborykin wrote it."

"Boborykin is a chatterbox!" asserted Clim's uncle. He lifted an admonitory finger. "Don't you imitate him. You're a young man. One shouldn't imitate Boborykin."

The door opened timidly and the writer's wife slipped in. He jumped up and seized her by the hand:

"Here's my wife, Ekatarina—Katiya."

Jacob Samghin greeted the woman amiably.

"A priest's daughter, eh?"

"Yes!"

"Her face shows it! One couldn't be mistaken. And are there any children?"

"They all die."

"Hm. And what do the young people read nowadays?"

Katin was talking meekly now, with less animation. It seemed to Clim that despite the joy with which the writer had met his uncle, he was afraid of him as a pupil is afraid of his instructor. But Uncle Jacob's hoarse voice had grown more powerful; into his words there had crept a rumbling tone.

Clim wanted to leave, but he considered that it would be awkward to leave his uncle. He sat in a corner near the stove, watching the writer's wife puttering around the table, silently placing the tea things, and glancing at the guest with frightened eyes.

She jumped noticeably when Uncle Jacob thundered:

"A revolution isn't made with intermissions."

Clim rejoiced when the chambermaid came in and called him to breakfast. Uncle Jacob waved the invitation aside:

"I live only on cooked rice, tea, and bread. And whoever breakfasts at two o'clock in the afternoon?" he asked, glancing at the wall clock.

At home, in the dining-room, Varavka was walking about with a frown on his face, combing his beard with a little black comb. He met Clim with a question:

"And where's Uncle?"

"He lives only on cooked rice."

They sat down to the table in silence. Clim's mother asked, with a sigh:

"How do you like him?"

Clim, aware of her feeling, answered:

"He's a strange fellow!"

His mother leaned back in her chair, narrowed her eyes, and said:

"Just like a ghost."

"A starving Hindu," her son added.

"He is no more than fifty," Clim's mother deliberated aloud. "He was a merry fellow, a dancer, always playing the tomfool. Then suddenly he went off among the people, joined some sectarians. He had an unsuccessful love affair, I believe."

Varavka wiped his beard, and poured wine generously into their glasses.

"They—all of them—have had an unsuccessful love affair with history. History is a Messalina, Clim. She loves liaisons with young people, but they must be brief. A young generation may scarcely have had its fill of playing, of day-dreaming, with her, when already new lovers arise in its place."

He wiped his beard briskly with his napkin and zealously fell

to discussing a history that was not made by the Hertzens, the Chernyshevskis, but by the Stephensons and the Arkwrights, and that in a land where the people believe in house-goblins and in wizards, where they still scratch the soil with a wooden plough, and where oratory accomplishes nothing.

"Above all else one needs a good plough, and then, after that, a parliament. Daring little words come cheap. One must speak in words which tame the instincts while they rouse the intellect," he shouted, growing more irritated as he went on. His face was red.

Clim's mother preserved a preoccupied silence. Clim involuntarily compared her silence with the mute fright of the writer's wife. In Varavka's sudden irritation there was something not unlike Katin's agitated tone.

"I'm thinking of putting him in the wing of the house," said Clim's mother, suddenly.

"What about Dronov?" asked Varavka.

"Yes. I don't know yet just how. . . ."

Varavka shrugged his shoulders.

"Do as you like."

But Uncle Jacob refused to live in the wing.

"Climbing stairs is bad for me; my legs hurt me," he said, and settled down at Katin's in the tiny room his wife's sister had occupied. The sister was moved into a lumber room. Clim's mother resented Uncle Jacob's determination to live elsewhere than at her house. "It's a demonstration!" Varavka snorted.

Uncle Jacob really did conduct himself in an extraordinary manner. He never dropped in at the house. He greeted Clim absent-mindedly and treated him like a stranger. He paced through the yard as if it were the street, with his head raised high, showing the grey bristles on the folds of his neck. He eyed the windows in passing with the casual glance of a stranger. He came out of the wing almost always at noon, during the sultry hours,

and returned toward evening, with his head bent meditatively, his hands thrust in the pockets of his thick trousers that were the colour of camel's hair.

"An old axe," Varavka had said of him. He did not conceal his dissatisfaction at the presence of Jacob Samghin in the wing of the house. Every day he referred to him with a rude mockery which evidently depressed Clim's mother and even affected Pheniya, the chambermaid. She began to look on the tenants in the wing and their guests with fear and enmity, as if she suspected they might set the house on fire.

Disturbed almost continuously now by erotic longings for women, Clim felt that he was growing duller, that he was fading, becoming obsessed like Makarov. There was almost hatred in his envy of Dronov, who, even though he had been expelled from school, still managed to find peace, and had begun working in Varavka's office while he continued stubbornly with Tomilin's help to prepare himself for the final examination.

9

Not knowing what to do with himself, Clim occasionally went to the wing of the house, to the writer's. Certain new faces had appeared there. One newcomer was a large-nosed midwife; another, a little old man whose eyes were hidden behind dark eyeglasses and who was forever rubbing his puffy hands and exclaiming, "I agree with that!" A man who described himself as a master-artisan — judging by his hands, he was a locksmith — had also put in his appearance. His favourite expression, which he used incessantly, was: "We've as much need of that as a dog has of a fifth leg."

The shutters of Katin's windows were always closed and their panes curtained; nevertheless the writer's wife frequently went

to the windows and lifted the curtains cautiously to peep out through the black square of glass, while every now and then her sister ran out to the entrance gates and looked up and down the street. When she came back Clim heard her low voice reassuring her sister:

"There's nobody there; not a soul!"

Clim scarcely listened to the speeches and disputes. For the most part they were already familiar, and they did not touch on affairs that interested him. Nor were his uncle's comments more satisfactory. He was, perhaps, less wordy than the others, but his simple thoughts embraced one idea only: "We must uplift the people."

Clim went to the wing only when he knew Lidia was to be there. That meant, of course, that Makarov also would be present. But as he watched the girl Clim became convinced that she was drawn there by something other than a desire to see Makarov. She always sat alone in some corner, her head covered with an orange kerchief which she wrapped closely about her despite the smoky heat of the room. She looked on silently with her lips tightly compressed and a severe expression in her grey eyes. It seemed to Clim that something new had come into her appearance and actions—something almost funny, a kind of make-believe widow's melancholy seriousness.

"What's your opinion of my uncle?" he asked her one night, and was amazed at her curious answer:

"He looks like John the Baptist."

One spring night when they were strolling in the garden after an evening at Katin's, Lidia remarked to Clim:

"It's strange that there are people who think of others beside themselves. It seems to me there is something insane in it, or at least something artificial."

Clim glanced at her almost with vexation; she had expressed exactly what he had felt, but had been unable to put into words.

"And then," continued the girl, "everything they say is somehow turned upside down. It seems to me that they speak hatefully about love for the people, and when they talk about their hatred of those in authority they speak lovingly. At least, that's how it seems to me when I listen to them."

"But of course that's not so," said Clim, hoping that she would ask "How's that?" Then he would have been able to shine before her; he already knew just what he would say. But the girl said nothing. She walked along thoughtfully, drawing her kerchief closely across her breast. Clim could not bring himself to tell her what he had intended to say.

A few days later he felt again that Lidia had robbed him of an opportunity to say something impressive. In the dining-room after supper Clim's mother began persistently to question Lidia about what was being discussed in the wing. Lidia, seated at the open window looking out into the garden, answered reluctantly and not very politely. After a moment she turned abruptly in her chair, faced Vera Petrovna, and burst out irritably:

"My father, too, is afraid that these people will infect me with something or other. No. I think all their speeches and disputes are only a game of hide-and-seek. People hide from their passions, from their ennui, perhaps from their vices. . . ."

"Bravo, my daughter!" exclaimed Varavka, sprawling in his chair, a cigar in one corner of his mouth. Lidia continued, more quietly:

"One must forget about one's self. Many desire to do so, I think. Not such men, of course, as Jacob Akimovich. He—I don't know how to put it—he has assumed the rôle of a victim of an idea, once for all. . . ."

"He fell, like a blind man into a pit," Varavka interrupted. But Clim, feeling himself paling with vexation, was reproaching himself: How does it happen that everybody manages to get

ahead of me? He remembered especially Tomilin's words about people hiding from themselves and from one another in ideas, because he had thought them true. Irritated, he turned on Lidia:

"That's one of Tomilin's sayings!"

"I didn't say that I had arrived at the idea myself" answered Lidia.

"You heard it from Makarov," insisted Clim.

"And what of it?"

"Uncle Jacob is a victim of history," said Clim. "He isn't Jacob, but Isaac."

"I don't understand," said Lidia, raising her eyebrows. Clim, angry with himself for saying something which had impressed nobody, muttered angrily:

"When Makarov is drunk, he talks desperate bosh. He even calls love a rudimentary emotion."

Varavka burst into guffaws of laughter and waved his cigar in the air. Vera Petrovna, smiling condescendingly, remarked:

"He evidently isn't familiar with the significance of 'rudimentary.'"

Lidia glanced at them and quietly went toward the door. It seemed to Clim that she had been offended by her father's laughter. Varavka groaned and mopped his tears:

"Ho, ho! Ah, these children, these children!"

Clim wanted to follow Lidia, to argue with her a bit, but Varavka, now tired of laughing, turned to him and began to discuss the school:

"They don't teach you what you should know! Civics—there's a science that should be taught in the very first classes, if we want to be a nation. Russia still is not a nation and I fear that she'll have to shake herself up once more, even as she was shaken up in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Then shall we be a nation —perhaps!"

Growing animated, he explained how the classes regarded each other with irony and enmity, like tribes of different cultures. Each of them was convinced, he said, that all the others could not understand it, and each calmly reconciled itself to this fact. At the same time all of them agreed on one point: that the population of the three adjoining districts, in folkways, customs, even in dialect, were a foreign and inferior people. The worst offenders in this regard, Varavka asserted, were the dwellers of this, his own city.

Clim was bored. He was not interested in the problems of Russia — the people, humanity, the intelligentsia — it was all too general and too remote. Of the sixty thousand inhabitants of the city, he knew sixty or a hundred individuals, yet he felt that he knew the whole city thoroughly — his quiet, dusty city, three-quarters of which was built of wood.

Before the city a turbid river flowed indolently. Over it of mornings the sun rose behind the monastery cemetery, travelled its unhurried path, and sank at night beyond the abbatoirs. The burghers peacefully lived on — merchants, commoners, artisans — herded by the clergy and the bureaucrats.

And the more he observed these lovers of disputes and dissensions, the more suspicious became his attitude toward them. There came to him a dim doubt as to the right of these people to decide the problems of life and inflict their decisions on him, Clim. For this purpose there must be other people more staid, less zealous — at any rate not half-insane, like tortured Uncle Jacob.

V

1

CLIM had come to regard Tomilin as by far the most exemplary human being of his acquaintance. Tomilin forced himself to meditate upon all things, and could not, or would not, indulge in any rash action. He did not try to bridle his auditor with his thoughts, but merely told him what he thought, and evidently cared little whether he was being listened to or not. He lived without interfering with anybody and made no demands that he be visited, as Katin, by means of pleasantries and smiles, was wont to do. One could visit him or not, as one pleased. He aroused neither sympathy nor antipathy, whereas the people in the wing of the house evoked a complex feeling of disquieting interest and dim antagonism in those who knew them. On the whole, one had to confess that Makarov was right when he had said about these people:

"Here everybody tries to train me, as a dog is trained to go after game."

Clim, who regarded their proselytism as an invasion of his personal liberty, had learned long ago to evade their attacks by polite silence or half-hearted assent.

His sexual emotions, aggravated by envy of Dronov's happy smiles, were constantly becoming more oppressive. They were evident even to Varavka. Once when he was passing through the corridor Clim overheard Varavka saying to his mother:

"At his age I was in love with my own aunt. Don't alarm yourself. He's not a romantic chap, nor a foolish one. What a pity it is that our chambermaid is so ugly!"

The cynical suggestion about the chambermaid had gone against Clim's grain. He was chagrined, too, that his yearnings had been noticed. However, Varavka's casual words were almost a permission. Two days later Clim's mother and Varavka had gone to a theatre. Lidia and Luba were visiting Alena Telepneva. Clim was lying down in his room with a headache. It was quiet in the house. Then suddenly from the dining-room came the sound of suppressed laughter. Something smacked resoundingly, like a slap on the cheek. A chair scraped, and two feminine voices began singing in a low pitch. Clim got up noiselessly and opened his door a bit. The chambermaid and Rita, the fine seamstress, were dancing a waltz around the table, in the middle of which a samovar gleamed like a brassy idol.

"One, two, three," Rita was instructing in a low voice. "Don't go shovin' with your knees. One, two . . . !"

The chambermaid, with her head bent, was carefully watching her feet. Rita, catching sight of Clim in the doorway, pushed her away quickly and bowed to him. Adjusting her dishevelled hair with both her hands, she said gayly:

"Oh, excuse me!"

"If you please—if you please," Clim stammered embarrassedly, thrusting his hands in his pockets, "I can even play a bit for you. Do you want me to?"

The chambermaid, abashed, seized the samovar and ran out. The seamstress began taking the dishes from the table and putting them on the tray.

"No, why should you!" she protested.

Clim did not remember clearly afterward all that then took place. He acted in a state of fear and sudden intoxication. Seizing

Rita by the hand, he drew her after him into his room, imploring her in a whisper:

"Please! please!"

She, laughing very low, tried to snatch her burning hand from his as she followed, whispering:

"What are you up to? You mustn't!"

Later, as she was leaving, she bent over him, and taking his face between her hands, kissed him three times on his lips.

"Ah—you, you, you!" she murmured in a choking whisper.

Coming to himself, Clim was amazed. How simple it had been! As he lay on the bed he seemed to be swaying from side to side. His body felt buoyant and powerful; at the same time it was drowsy with a pleasant fatigue. He recalled Rita's passionate whispering. In those three last kisses she had given him there had been both praise and gratitude.

"And yet I have made her no promises," he reflected, and immediately asked himself: "What does Dronov pay her with?"

The reminder of Dronov cooled him a bit; here there was something rather dark, something equivocal, and even amusing. As if justifying himself before somebody, Clim Samghin said, half-aloud:

"Of course I shan't allow this to happen again!" But a minute later he decided otherwise: "I'll tell her: 'Don't you ever dare to go with Dronov again!'"

He wanted to light a lamp, to get up and look at himself in a mirror, but the thoughts about Dronov, vaguely foreboding unpleasantness, deterred him. He managed to dispel them promptly, however, by reminding himself of Makarov and his squeamish alarms, recalling the piffling *Triumphs of Woman,* "a rudimentary emotion," and other such funny twaddle on which this man subsisted. There was no doubt of it: Makarov had thought all this

out to bolster his self-esteem, and probably he was a greater libertine in secret than any of the others. "For if he drinks, then he must be a libertine as well — that's certain," Clim concluded.

These reflections enabled Clim to dismiss Makarov mentally with a little sneer of contempt. He soon fell asleep, and when he awoke he felt himself another man, as if he had grown up overnight. There had awakened in him a realization of his own significance, which gave him respect for, and faith in, himself. There was something gay, too, stirring within him. He wanted to sing as the spring sun peeped into the window of his room; it shone so much more brightly than it had the day before! But still he felt impelled to hide his new mood from everybody. He bore himself restrainedly, as always, but his thoughts about the seamstress were now kindly, grateful.

2

After five days, passed by Clim in a pleased consciousness of having taken so simply such a serious step, Pheniya, the chambermaid, thrust cautiously into his hand a crumpled envelope with a blue forget-me-not embossed on one corner. On a satiny sheet of paper, which also bore a forget-me-not, Clim, not without pride, read:

"In case you have not forgotten, come tomorrow, after the ringing of the bells for the midnight mass.

"Make it the last corner, Vesselyi's house. Ask for Mar. Vaganova."

Marguerita met him as if he had come, not for the first, but for the tenth time. After he had placed a box of candy, a basket of pastry and a bottle of port wine on the table, she asked, smiling slyly:

"That means you want to have tea?"

Clim hugged her and said:

"I want to have you love me."

"But I don't know how!" the woman replied, with kindly laughter.

One felt amazingly at ease with her, with everything about her, in this little clean room filled with a strangely intoxicating odour. In the corner near the wall, with its head to the window that looked out on a low roof, stood the bed, covered with a white piqué blanket. White curtains covered the window. From beyond the roof rose up the pale pink branches of apple and cherry trees in blossom. A wasp was beating against a pane. On the bureau were arranged little boxes and little jars. The silver chasuble of an icon shone in a corner. Everything was calm and quiet; the wasp's buzzing, an essential part of it all. The whole room seemed unmeasureable miles away from everything to which Clim was accustomed.

Marguerita was talking in a low lazy voice, drawling out empty phrases, not questioning him about anything. Clim could find nothing worth while to say to her, either. He felt stupid, and covered his confusion by smiling at her. Marguerita, sitting close to him, looked up into his face with a devouring glance, as if she remembered something. Her look disturbed Clim. He stroked her shoulder timidly, and her breasts, but could not summon courage to venture on greater liberties. After they had drunk two ponies of port wine, Marguerita asked:

"Well, shall we go to beddy?"

She got up and began to disrobe.

"You undress yourself altogether, too—that'll be better," she advised him.

An hour later, sitting on the edge of the bed, naked, she scrutinized the toe of one of Clim's socks, and said with a tired yawn:

"That ought to be darned."

Clim was dozing.

After five or six such meetings he felt more at home in Marguerita's place than in his own room. With her one did not have to keep track of one's self. She asked of him neither intellect nor restraint; she made no demands; and she enriched him with much that he considered valuable to himself.

3

He began to look on the girls of his acquaintance with new eyes. He observed that Luba Somov had drawn-in hips. Her skirt hung upon her thighs too flatly, and behind she was puffed out too much. Luba's walk was hopping, like a sparrow's. Despite the fact that she was a fat little thing and clumsily built, she talked often about love and told about various love affairs. Her little face, which had somewhat improved in looks, grew rosy with excitement as she talked, and in her kind grey eyes glowed the peaceful light of an old woman who talks about miracles, the lives of the saints and the great martyrs. She was so naïve, sometimes even pathetic, that Clim considered it necessary to encourage her with kindly smiles even as he reflected: "What a little simpleton! A little fool."

Her stories almost always irritated Lidia, but sometimes even she had to laugh. At such times her laugh was guarded, hesitant and shrill. She would stop quickly and look about her, frowning, as if she had been guilty of doing something unseemly. Luba loved to read novels, and passed them on to Lidia. But the latter was more critical. After reading *Madame Bovary,* she said angrily:

"Everything that's true here is an abomination, and all that is good is a lie."

Of *Anna Karenina* Lidia spoke even more harshly:

"All the people in the book are mares and stallions — Anna, and Vronsky himself, as well as all the others."

Luba became indignant:

"My God, what an ignoramus you are, what a monster! You're some sort of abnormal person!"

Clim also thought Lidia somewhat abnormal. He had even come to be a bit afraid of her extremely intense, questioning look, even though it was bestowed on Makarov as well as on him. However, Clim noticed that her manner toward Makarov was becoming more friendly, and Makarov no longer challenged her so mockingly.

Clim was much impressed by Lidia's friendship with Alena Telepneva, who, growing dazzingly beautiful, was clearly becoming more and more stupid — though this latter fact had not occurred to him until his mother remarked one day:

"That girl would be better and cleverer if she weren't such a beauty."

Clim immediately acknowledged that this was truly said. Her beauty seemed to be a never-ending source of ceaseless alarm for the girl. Alena regarded her beauty as if it were a treasure bestowed on her by somebody for only a brief time and under the threat of immediate withdrawal if she were to do anything that would spoil her enchanting face. A cold for her was a serious illness; she would ask in fright:

"Is my nose very red? My eyes are dull — yes?"

An insignificant pimple on her face would throw her into despondency, just as hangnails did, or a mosquito's bite. She was afraid of growing stout, and of losing weight. She was afraid of thunder.

"Let there be lightnings," she would say. "They're beautiful; but I absolutely can't bear having the sky crackling over me."

She had worked out for herself a careful, gliding walk and held

herself as erect as if there were a vessel with water set on her head. At the skating ground, afraid of falling, she skated alone slowly on the side or chose the more experienced racing skaters, of whose skill and strength she felt certain. The only thing that Clim found pleasing in this girl was her ability to make herself comfortable. She always chose for herself the most advantageous place, the ray of the sun that would be especially kind to her. Somewhat amusing was her exaggerated cleanliness of person and her almost unhealthy aversion to dust, rubbish and to street mire. Before sitting down she scrutinized the chair and flicked her small handkerchief over its seat. She seemed to be always fastidiously wiping her fingers. At meals her manner became so formal and concentrated that Makarov had once rallied her:

"You eat religiously, Allinochka. You don't even eat like unto us mortals — you take communion, almost."

But Alena answered calmly:

"The doctor advised me to masticate my food thoroughly."

Occasionally Alena's fears for her beauty brought on fits of irritation like those of a chambermaid against a too-demanding mistress. Her habitual fear had given Alena's irresistibly kind blue eyes a questioning look, while her long trembling lashes lent her glance a pleading expression.

She was a bore. She could talk of nothing but clothes, dances, and her admirers, but even of these she spoke without animation. She was already being courted by a grey-haired general of the artillery, a widower, graceful and handsome, with clever eyes. The district attorney's assistant, Ippolitov, a gay, adroit little mannikin with black moustaches on a swarthy face, also courted her.

"No, I don't want to marry," she would say languidly, "I'm going to be an actress."

Her voice was musical, and she recited poems by Phet and

Phophanov rather effectively, but with an excessive sweetness. She liked to sing dreamy gypsy ballads, but they sounded soulless as she sang them; the words of the poems were lifeless and vague, smothered by her velvety voice. Clim was convinced that she had no understanding of the significance of the words which she sang.

"A doll that one feels sorry to play with," Makarov described her in the negligent way he always spoke about girls.

Clim eyed him askance. He was smarting under the sting of envy he felt whenever he heard anyone make a clever characterization. Makarov made them with a disturbing frequency.

Clim would gladly have found in Alena — as, indeed, in everyone else — something artificial, something "thought up." Every now and then she would ask him:

"I am pale today — yes?"

He realized that Alena was asking only because she wished to attract attention to herself; but this seemed to him natural and justifiable, and even aroused his sympathy for the girl. This sympathy had been intensified by his mother's comment, which had suggested the idea that Alena's beauty might be in the nature of a punishment which darkened her life, which drove her every five minutes to the mirror, and compelled her to look into everyone's face as into a mirror, expecting to be assured of her beauty. Occasionally he would feel vaguely that between him and her there was some common bond, but considering this of no advantage to himself, he did not encourage the feeling.

He saw that Makarov and Lidia were sharply divided in their opinions of Alena. Lidia regarded her solicitously, even with tenderness — a feeling which Clim seldom observed in Lidia. Makarov stubbornly persisted in making fun of Alena. Lidia quarrelled with him. Luba Somov, who ran about tutoring, reconciled them. Then she read them long interesting letters writ-

ten to her by her friend Inokov, who had left his position in the telegraph office and gone off with a crew of Sergach fishermen to the Caspian Sea.

4

Life at home was a constant bore. Clim's mother and Varavka, in the evenings, preoccupied and angry, added up figures and made calculations. Their papers made a crisp crackling noise. Varavka, slamming his palm against the table, would complain:

"The idiots! They don't know how to steal even!"

The tedium he experienced at Marguerita's was more to Clim's liking. That tedium did not oppress but calmed him, dulling his thoughts, making unnecessary all these "inventions." He rested at the seamstress' from the need of holding himself like a soldier on parade. Marguerita brought him an interest of her own by the simplicity of her emotions and thoughts. Occasionally, probably suspecting that he was bored, she sang in a tiny mewing voice songs he had never heard:

I can neither sleep nor lie,
Nor forget myself in slumber;
I'd go calling upon Rita
But I do not know her number.
I'm afraid to ask my friend
For to take me where she is,
For he's handsomer and better
And he'd make my Rita his.

"What a silly song," said Clim with a yawn, but the singer answered instructively:

"That's just what's good about it, my little friend. All songs are silly; they're all about love. That's just what's good about them."

She willingly taught Clim all that she knew, and this diverted him. He was amused, but also not a little touched, by her maternal solicitude for him, and her lack of avarice amazed him. Vaguely he had reached the conclusion that all girls following her trade were greedy. But when he brought sweets and presents to Rita, she, accepting them, would reproach him:

"What an odd little fellow! Why, for the money which you spend on me you could find a girl who's handsomer and younger than I!"

She said it so simply and convincingly that Clim could not find the heart to suspect her of insincerity.

But, if she talked about a girl handsomer than herself, she boasted, smoothing with her palms her bosom and hips:

"D'you see what a skin I have? It isn't every high-born miss that has one like it."

On the wall over the bureau, fastened by two nails, hung a little unframed photograph, broken across in two. It was of a young man, smoothly combed, with thick eyebrows and a huge moustache, his cravat tied in a magnificent bow. His eyes were pricked out.

"Who's this?" asked Clim.

For a few moments Marguerita looked at the photograph, puckering her brows as if trying to remember.

"He paints icons," she said.

"But why are his eyes pricked out?"

"He became blind, the fool!" answered Rita. She sighed, and seemed unwilling to answer any more questions, but proposed instead:

"Well, shall we go to beddy?"

During a tender moment he decided, finally, to ask her about Dronov. He felt it imperative for him to ask her about it, even though he felt that the longer it was put off, the more the ques-

tion lost its urgency and significance. There was concealed in it something that confused him, something unwholesome. When he had asked the question, Rita raised her eyebrows in wonder:

"Who's he?"

"Don't pretend!" Clim wanted to make the last word sound stern, but could not, and he even smiled.

Rita raised her head from the pillow, sat up, and put on her chemise. Then she covered her face with it and began to protest:

"Ah, that's Vaniya, who lives in the wing of our house. You think I had truck with a fellow like that? Why, he hasn't got a leg to stand on! You weren't so bright to think up a thing like that!"

Pulling the stockings onto her white legs with their little blue veins, she went on hurriedly but distinctly, with frequent sighs:

"One feels sorry for him. Why, it was in my presence that the priest chased him out. That day I was working at the priest's. Vaniya was giving lessons to his daughter and was up to some mischief — he pinched the chambermaid, or something like that. He tried to grab hold of me, too. I threatened that I'd complain to the priest's wife, so he left me alone. He's amusing anyway, even though he's a malicious fellow."

In another tone and more quietly she finished her story:

"They chased him out of the *gymnasium*. They ought to have pulled his ears and let it go at that!"

Clim wanted to believe her. He did believe her, and Dronov's depressing shadow thereupon vanished.

The youth had long since comprehended that the clean little bed near the wall was for this girl a sacrificial altar upon which she performed the sacred offices indefatigably and almost piously. After the conversation about Dronov, which had calmed him, Clim wished to do for Rita, as often as possible, whatever might please her. But the only things that pleased her, he found, were

malt cakes made with honey, and kisses, which she never tired of. Already there had come a day when her spurring invitation, "Well, shall we go to beddy?" had roused in him a sudden dark irritation, had seemed an affront. He began almost angrily asking her why she did not read books, did not go to the theatre, did not know anything better than going to bed. But Rita, evidently without catching his tone, asked calmly, as she took down her hair:

"But what else is there to do with one's life? Just think about that a bit, and you'll find there is nothing."

She did go to theatres, she asserted:

"Whenever they put on jolly comedies, or musical pieces. Dramas I don't like. I do go to church, the Church of the Annunciation. They've a better choir there than at the cathedral."

Sometimes Clim, tired and dissasisfied with himself, would reflect:

"So this, after all, is love?"

For some reason it was impossible to grant that Lidia Varavka was created for such love, and it was difficult to imagine that this love alone was the basis of the novels and the poems he had read, or even that it was at the root of Makarov's sufferings, who was becoming ever sadder, drinking less and speaking less, and who even whistled now in a lower key.

5

Days came for Clim when he, after meetings with Marguerita, felt himself so devastated, so dulled, that in fright he forced himself to go to the fountains of wisdom — to Tomilin's, or into the wing of the house.

Something had happened to Tomilin. He had changed his dress

for coloured " phantasia " blouses with which he wore a tasselled cord instead of a necktie, and a grey jacket with very wide lilac-coloured trousers. This clothing seemed inappropriate, and made even more prominent the fiery redness of his clipped hair that stuck out horizontally above his ears and reared up over his white forehead. Especially noticeable were his cuff-links, large, heavy sickle-moons. Tomilin spoke louder these days, but somehow with less assurance. He made frequent pauses and twisted his cuff-links nervously. It seemed as if new ideas had come to him with his new outfit. Clim sensed that these thoughts even frightened him with their coarse nakedness, which might be taken both for fearlessness and for shamelessness. At times Clim pictured to himself these naked thoughts in the form of wisps of acrid smoke or tatters of clouds. They crawled through the warm air of the crowded room and covered books, walls, window panes, and even the thinker himself with grey dirty dust.

Holding in his hand one of the five enormous tomes by Maurice Carrière, *Art in Relation to the General Development of Culture,* he would say:

" A certain Italian asserts that genius is one of the forms of insanity.[13] That's possible. Generally it is difficult to acknowledge that people of magnified abilities are normal. Let us take gluttons, voluptuaries, and . . . thinkers. Yes, even thinkers. It is certainly admissible that an excessively developed brain is as great a monstrosity as an expanded stomach or an inordinately large phallus. So we find something in common between Gargantua, Don Juan, and the philosopher Emmanuel Kant."

Clim approved this idea as he did all wise ideas that were simply said. He observed that Tomilin himself was amazed by his discovery, evidently an accidental one. Having thrown the heavy book onto his cot, he looked out of the window, his eyebrows moving and his hands on the nape of his neck.

"Yes," he said, blinking. "I must go down below, to tea. Hm."

More and more often, and with a kind of dejection, Tomilin talked about women and things feminine. Sometimes his way of expressing himself was scandalous. On one occasion, in the wing of the house, when the writer had been warmly asserting that beauty is truth, the red-headed one had said, in his usual tone of a man who knows exactly the authentic visage of truth:

"No. Beauty is a lie; it is — all of it, through and through — man's invention for his self-consolation, even as mercy is, and many other things."

"But what about nature? What about the beauty of forms in nature? Take Haeckel . . ." the writer victoriously shouted. In answer came the passionless comment:

"Nature is a chaotic collection of all sorts of hideousnesses and monstrosities."

"Take flowers!" the writer refused to surrender.

"In nature there are no such roses and tulips as have been created by the people of England, France and Holland."

The dispute was becoming angry; but the higher the voices of those in disagreement, the more stubbornly quiet became Tomilin's. Finally he said:

"Beauty is more than ever necessary to us when we approach woman as one animal approaching another. In this province of relations, beauty has sprung from a feeling of shame, from man's not wishing to be like a goat or a rabbit."

He added a few more even coarser remarks which ended the dispute by causing a general confusion of spiteful sneers and ironic whisperings. Uncle Jacob, who was lying ill on the divan, surrounded by pillows, expressed his amazement in a low voice:

"Is he crazy?"

The writer, smiling, whispered something in his ear, to which Clim's uncle, with a shake of his bald head, replied:

"He has come too late to the fair. The Nihilists reasoned far more intelligently."

Clim's uncle was evidently pleased by something these days. His parched face had become lighter, more bony, but the eyes had a better-natured look and he smiled frequently. Clim knew that he was preparing to depart for Saratov, to live there. In the wing of the house Clim felt himself more out of place than ever. Everything that was said there about the people, about a love for the people, had been familiar to him since childhood. The words had a hollow ring that awakened in him no responsive strain: Their tedium weighed him down, and Clim had trained himself not to hear them.

He had become much intrigued by the frankly malicious glances that Dronov cast in the teacher's direction. Dronov, too, had changed suddenly, it seemed. Despite his constant keen observation of people, it seemed to Clim that they always eluded him, changing suddenly by leaps, like the minute hand on an intricate watch that Varavka had recently purchased. There was no gradation in the movement of its minute hand; it sprang from mark to mark. A man changed character in the same way: though yesterday he had been still the same as half a year ago, today he was different; there suddenly appeared a new trait in him.

In his dark blue jacket, in black trousers and broad-toed shoes, Dronov's figure had attained a comic staidness. But his face had shrunk, his eyes had become immobile, their pupils had grown darker, and in the whites of his eyes had appeared reddish little veins like those of a man who suffers from insomnia. He did not ask questions eagerly and often as he once had. He spoke less, listened more absent-mindedly, and with his elbows against his sides, his fingers interlocked, he twirled his thumbs like an old

man. He glanced sidewise evasively as he talked; he caught his breath frequently as if weary; and one sensed that he was not speaking his real thoughts.

6

After every meeting with Rita, Clim felt a strong impulse to question Dronov and try to catch him in a lie. But to have done so would have meant disclosing his own connection with the seamstress, and Clim knew that he had little cause for pride in his first love affair. Then something happened that struck him deeply. One evening Dronov unceremoniously entered Clim's room, slumped down in a chair, and glumly began talking:

"Listen here, Varavka wants to transfer my job to Ryazan, but that, brother, doesn't suit me. Who'd prepare me for the university there in Ryazan — and without pay at that, like Tomilin?"

He picked up a glass paper weight from the table, held it under an oblique ray of the sun, and watched the iridescent spots on the wall and ceiling as he continued:

"Then there's Marguerita. It wouldn't pay me to leave her. She does for me, as they say, what with sewing and washing. Besides that, I'm attached to her. And I understand, too, that I'm none too sweet a thing for her."

He made a wry face and turned the iridescent ray on the photograph of Clim's mother, on her face. Clim felt something insulting in this. He was seated at a table, but at the mention of Rita he jumped to his feet quickly.

"Stop fooling around," he said, dryly, puckering up his eyes as if the ray had struck them. Dronov carelessly tossed the paper weight onto the table. Clim, trying to speak indifferently, asked:

"Are you still living with her?"

"Well, why shouldn't I be living with her?"

Clim sat down on the edge of the table, studying Dronov; in

the calm tone in which he spoke about Rita Clim caught something suspicious. So, very amiably, and pretending to be naïve, he began questioning him in detail about the girl. As for Dronov, his boastfulness had returned to him, and in another minute Clim wanted to shout at him: "Get out of here!"

"She's a good soul," Dronov said.

Clim turned his back to him, and Dronov, suddenly frowning, leapt to another theme:

"I'll soon take to hating Tomilin; even now I sometimes feel like boxing his ears! I must know, yet he teaches me not to believe. He affirms that algebra is arbitrary, and the devil alone can understand what he's after! He's forever declaring that man must rend the cobweb of conceptions woven by reason, that he must spring out into some place or other, into the infinitude of freedom. The result is something like this: Stroll about naked! What devil is turning the handle of this coffee-grinding machine?"

Clim answered through clenched teeth:

"He's a very intelligent fellow!"

"Intelligent?" Dronov plainly voiced his doubts. He glanced angrily at the clock and got up.

"Well, then — have a chat with Varavka!"

One felt better without him in the room. Clim, wrathful and humiliated, stood for a moment at the window plucking the leaves of a begonia. Then Varavka's voice sounded in the entry and Clim ran out to him. Varavka was standing before the mirror, grimacing as he combed his bushy beard.

"To Ryazan, to Ryazan!" he angrily answered Clim's question. "Or he can go wherever his eyes take him. Don't make any requests."

"I had not intended to make any — for him," said Clim, with dignity.

Varavka put his arm around Clim's waist and led him off to his study, saying:

"I'm tired of this lad. He works wretchedly; he's absent-minded; he's impudent; and he's too fond of chatting with those tenants of mine who are under police surveillance."

"Yes," said Clim. "He's drawn to them, he is so frequently in the wing of the house."

Having seated Clim in an armchair near his enormous work table, Varavka continued:

"I can't understand what draws you to such types as Dronov and Makarov. Are you studying them, perhaps?"

Though he was always mocking and often abrupt, Varavka also knew how to speak ingratiatingly, with an amicable convincingness. Clim had already more than once felt how easily this man compelled him to say more than he should say. He tried to be evasive and cautious this time, but Varavka subtly drew out of him the statement that Lidia and Makarov met much too often, and that their relations seemed very much like a love affair. This came out naturally and inevitably: two serious men, mental equals, were chatting about some young and not entirely poised persons, in a concern over their future. It would have been even awkward to keep silent about the strange relationship between Lidia and Makarov.

Varavka closed his bear-like eyes for a few seconds, thrust his hand beneath his beard, and with a rapid gesture spread it out like a fan. Then, with a fleshy smile, he said:

"Romanticism. An ailment of their age. It will pass by, I'm sure. Lidia is in the Crimea. In the fall she's going off to a school of dramatic arts."

"But then Makarov will be in the Moscow University," Clim reminded him.

Varavka said nothing. He began to clip his nails. The cut-

tings flew onto the table which was piled high with papers. Presently he took out a small notebook and made certain marks therein in pencil. He started to whistle a tune, but it trailed off flatly.

"Do you drop in at the wing?" he asked, slapping Clim's knee with a friendly hand.

"My advice is, don't go there! Of course, these people are guileless and harmless; all their wordiness resolves itself into the conclusion that the leopard must change its spots. But—there are those who have a different opinion about them. If political police exist in the government, there must be political criminals too. Even if politics are just now as much out of style as a tournament, still they have the force of inertia, and there are also sectarians of the old faith. Revolution in Russia is possible only in the form of a *mouzhik* riot—as a manifestation culturally sterile, destructive."

After that he talked at length about the insurrection of the Dekabrists, calling it "a singular tragic buffonade." The affair of the Petrashevtzi [14] he described as "a conspiracy of chatter-boxes by trade." Before he had a chance to pass on to the Narodniki,[15] Clim's mother entered majestically, dressed in lavender, with a long string of pearls on her bosom.

"It's time to be going!" she said sternly, "but you haven't changed your clothes yet!"

"Pardon me!" Varavka exclaimed guiltily, as he jumped up and hurried away. "We were having such a very interesting conversation."

It always pleased Clim to see that his mother ruled this man like a creature inferior to her, like a horse. She followed Varavka with her eyes and sighed. Then, smoothing her son's eyebrows with fragrant fingers she inquired:

"What were you talking about?"

"I think I acted tactlessly," confessed Clim, thinking of Dronov, but telling her about Lidia and Makarov.

"What else could you have done?" His mother was slightly perplexed. "You were obliged to warn her father."

"I'm ready," said Varavka appearing in the doorway. Dressed in a frock coat, he was especially impressive.

7

They went away. Clim was left in the mood of a man who does not know whether or not it is necessary to solve a dilemma suddenly confronting him. He opened the window; the damp evening air came into the room. A tiny dove-grey cloud covered the moon's sickle. Clim decided: "I'll go to her."

He decided, but fell into deep thought. His sudden desire to go to Marguerita was dimmed by a feeling of awkwardness. He was afraid that he, unable to restrain his impatience, would ask her about Dronov, and it would suddenly turn out that Dronov had been telling the truth. He did not hanker after such a truth.

From the wing of the house darkly silhouetted people were coming one after the other, with bundles and suitcases in their hands. The writer was leading Uncle Jacob, supporting him under the arm. Clim wanted to run out into the yard, but remained at the window, remembering that his uncle had long ago ceased to distinguish him from other people. The writer helped Clim's uncle to seat himself in the carriage of a shabby Jehu. His uncle cried out:

"But where's the packet?"

"I have it," loudly answered the writer.

The carriage rolled off heavily through the darkness of the street.

Clim's uncle had pulled his hat down over his eyes without look-

ing back at the gate where the writer's wife, her sister, and two other people brandished their handkerchiefs and hats, joyously shouting, "Farewell!"

All this, and the darkness, reminded Clim of a scene from some dull novel describing the farewell to a young heroine who has decided to work as a governess in order that she might support her impoverished family.

Clim sighed. He listened awhile as the silence swallowed the carriage's rumbling. He wanted to think about his uncle, to enclose him within a frame of significant words; but within his head was nagging like a midge the offensive question:

"But what if Dronov told the truth?"

This question, holding him back from going to Marguerita, would not allow him to think of anything but her. After sitting a tedious hour in the darkness, he went to his room, lit the lamp, and looked into a mirror. It showed him a face almost unfamiliar, drawn into a grimace of perplexity. He put out the light, undressed in the darkness and lay down in bed, pulling the sheets over his head. But after a few minutes he convinced himself that it was necessary, this very day, right now, to catch Marguerita in a lie. Without lighting the lamp, he dressed and went to her, working himself into a militant mood, stepping firmly. As always, Marguerita met him with the familiar cry:

"Aha, so you've come!"

For some time now he had been depressed by those words. He never could discover either joy or pleasure in them. And more and more shameful seemed her monotonous caresses, which she repeated by rote, as she probably would for the rest of her life. Already at times the necessity for those caresses had become more than a bore to Clim; it even shook his self-respect.

But this time the familiar words had an unusually abstracted sound. Marguerita was just come from a bath. She was sitting

near the bureau before a mirror, combing out her moist, darkened hair. Her red face seemed wrathful.

Jestingly, but with a hand that trembled with ire, Clim slapped her soundly on her warm shoulder, which still showed the effects of steam. She ducked and turned on him furiously:

"That hurts! What are you about?"

But she subsided immediately and began talking in a business-like tone.

"Well, here's some news for you; I'm getting a good place—in a convent—a school; I'm going to teach the girls there to sew. And they'll give me a room there at the school. That means good-bye. Men aren't allowed to go there."

Letting her chemise drop to her knees and wiping her neck and breast with a towel, she did not request, but commanded:

"Wipe my back for me."

At sight of her nakedness the youth felt his reserve of militancy vanishing. But the girl's order to wipe her back amazed and annoyed him. She had never addressed herself to him with requests for such services, and he could not remember any occasion when his politeness would have compelled him to perform for Rita any service similar to that which she was now demanding. He kept his seat and said nothing. The girl asked:

"Lazy?"

In a flash of malice he spoke out contemptuously:

"You lied to me. Dronov is your lover!"

He realized immediately that he had not said it as he should have, nor in the right words. Marguerita, putting on her new shoes, stooped over them with her back toward him. She answered after a moment, quite calmly:

"So that's how simply it has all come to an end!"

And she asked:

"Was it Phenya who told you?"

Drumming his fingers against the copper buckle of his belt, Clim awaited to hear what else she might say. But Marguerita went on buttoning her shoes and said nothing.

"Dronov himself told me," Clim declared roughly.

She got up, and raising her skirt a trifle, critically surveyed her feet. Then she sat down again and repeated with a sigh of relief:

"So that's how nicely it has all come to an end! And here I was thinking for a whole week, How am I going to tell him that I can't go with him any more?"

Clim felt that she was forcing him to appear foolish. At a loss, he asked:

"Why did you lie?"

The girl answered in an even tone, looking out of the window abstractedly as though she were thinking of something entirely different from what she was saying:

"Your mother dear wasn't paying me money for to be telling you the truth, but so's you wouldn't be traipsing around with street walkers — so's you wouldn't be infected."

Clim experienced the sensation of a burn. He began to shout at her:

"You lie! My mother could not. . . ."

"They're pinching me," said Rita quietly, thrusting out one foot from beneath the hem of her skirt. Through his rage and confusion Clim dimly heard her curse out somebody as a "scoundrel!"

"Don't be angry against your mother dear," Rita was advising him, "she has your welfare at heart. In the whole town I know only three mothers in all who take such good care of their sons."

Clim heard her incongruous words through a humming noise in his head. His legs trembled. If Rita had not been speaking so

indifferently, he would have thought that she was making fun of him.

"That means my mother hired her," he decided. "She paid her — that's why this trash was so unavaricious!"

"Even though she's proud, and has done me wrong, I'll still say she is a rare mother. Now that she's refused to help me so's not to have Vaniya sent off to Ryazan, don't you be a-coming to me any more. And I won't go to work in your house any more, neither!"

The last phrase she pronounced threateningly, as if she thought that without her help the Samghins and the Varavkas would become the most miserable of people. Clim felt like unbuckling his belt and slashing it across the girl's face that was still red and perspiring. But he found himself almost paralyzed by this stupid scene. In shame and indignation he turned red from his shoulders to his ears and stalked out of the room. He went without looking at Marguerita again, without saying a single word to her, as she sent him on his way with an exclamation of reproach:

"Fie! That's not at all nice! And you used to be so polite, too!"

8

For a long time he walked about the streets; then he sat down on a bench in the city park, wondering what he was to do. He wanted to beat up Dronov, or to tell him that Marguerita was being hired as a prostitute. He wanted to tell his mother something very overpowering, which would crush her. But these desires glided on the surface of an obstinate, persistent stream of thought about Marguerita. He had grown accustomed to regard her condescendingly, ironically. Now for the first time he was thinking of the girl with all the seriousness of which he was ca-

pable. An incomprehensible double image of Marguerita formed in his mind. There came to his recollection her indubitably honest caresses, her unassuming and frequently amusing, yet sincere, words — those foolish, tender words of love which compelled one of Maupassant's heroes to renounce his inamorata. What caresses, then, did she bestow on Dronov — what words did she whisper to him? With a dull perplexity he remembered the pains the girl took for the pleasures of his body, and asked himself how she could have lied to him so cleverly and so deftly. And when he thought of her words about the three solicitous mothers and reflected that perhaps there had been entrusted to Marguerita's care two more like him, an odd thought flashed through his mind: "Is she a prostitute or a Sister of Mercy?"

But that thought immediately vanished when he concluded that Rita, evidently, loved only the fourth, the homely disagreeable Dronov.

These thoughts filling him with the feeling that he had been wronged, were oppressing him unbearably, but Clim had not the strength to banish them. He sat on the cast-iron bench with his face toward the dark, desolate river. Its water every now and then showed a dull sheen, like an enormous sheet of roof iron. It floated on lazily, noiselessly, and seemed to be far away. The night was dark and moonless. On the water's surface, like yellow grease spots, were reflected the stars. Behind his back Clim heard people walking, laughter, and talk; a tenor voice sang to the tune of *La donna e mobile*:

I hear your voice, dear,
Caressing and tender;
That means to your voice
My purse I surrender. . . .

Overwhelming vulgarity rang victoriously in this snatch of song. Clim suddenly grew frightened of something, jumped up, and rapidly went home.

9

His mother and Varavka had gone off to their country house below the city. Alena was living in the country too; Lidia and Luba Somov were in Crimea. Clim had stayed on at home in order to keep an eye on it while it was being repaired and to study Latin with Rzhiga. When he was alone he did not feel obliged to play his customary rôle, and Clim was very slowly recovering from the blow that had been dealt him. He was thinking constantly of Marguerita, but his thoughts, gradually becoming less sad, even as they were becoming less offensive, were at the same time all the more confused. His thoughts eventually placed the girl in altogether a new light. Clim no longer thought that Marguerita was stupid. As his memory recalled the instructive things she had said it seemed to him that most of her remarks had been tinged with a malice against women. He recalled that once after she had jumped off the bed and wiped her perspiring body with a sponge, Marguerita had said approvingly:

"It's a very good thing for you that you aren't ardent. Our kind likes to make the ardent ones red-hot, and then burn them up to cinders. Many of 'em come to ruin through us."

And another time she had warned him kindly:

"Don't you go believing in women's love. Just you remember that women don't love with the soul, but with the body. Women are cunning — ugh! They're bad. They don't even like each other. Just take a look on the street and see how maliciously and enviously they eye one another. That's because they're greedy; every one of them is mad 'cause there's somebody else beside her living on earth."

She had even launched into the story of a love affair, but Clim had dozed off, so that of the whole love affair there had remained in his memory only a few words:

"And what was she after? Just to get him away from me. You know, 'Just see how much smarter I am than you!'"

Now, as he remembered her advice, he was amazed at its copiousness, its consistency, and the idea occurred to him that Rita said these things at the demand of her conscience, in order that by her hints she might warn him of her approaching deception.

"Am I trying to vindicate her?" he would ask himself; but immediately he would recall Dronov's flat face, his smirks, his shameless stories about Marguerita.

"Were I to fall from heaven into a river, she would drown me as Varya Somov drowned Boris," he thought maliciously.

But even while he thought about Rita with hatred he felt rising in him a debasing desire to go to her, and this made him more angry than ever. He found an outlet for his irritation by directing it against some workmen.

On a diagonal, almost opposite the Samghin house, stonemasons were demolishing an old two-storey building that looked like a barracks. It had small dismal windows, and remnants of yellow paint clung to its scaling surface. Varavka had recently acquired the property for the Merchants' Club. There were about a score of dusty people working on it, but out of this number two stood out particularly: a curly, thick-lipped lad with round eyes and a shaggy face which was grey from dust, and a little old man in a blue blouse and long apron. The lad's hardened hands mechanically crumbled with his crowbar the bricks of the old wall. The lad's strength was tremendous; he boasted about it, and the old man egged him on, squealing:

"Fire away, Motiya! Knock 'er down, Motiya, the end's in sight!"

The overseer who had charge of ten of the workers, a red-bearded, large *mouzhik,* spoke to him:

"Don't you be playin' round, Nikolaich! What's the use of breaking up the bricks?"

The little old man answered facetiously:

"But is it me that's a-doing it? Why, it's Motiya. Eh, Motiya, you son of a sea-cook, but you're strong!"

Then he himself struck his crowbar against the whole brick instead of into the mortar which bound them. The overseer again yelled through habit, but indifferently, that the old brick could be used again — it was larger, more compact than the new. The little old man squealed out in agreement:

"Right-o! Eh, Motiya-a!"

All of the workers were breaking up the wall with a right good will, but the little old man, it seemed to Clim, had somehow gotten out of hand, and was repulsive in his frenzy. As for Motiya, he worked on blindly like a machine, and whenever he succeeded in breaking off several bricks at once he grunted a loud "Ugh!" The workers laughed and whistled; the old man kept up his uncanny squealing: "Fire away!"

"Idiots!" thought Clim.

He suddenly remembered his grandmother's speechless tears as she viewed the ruins of her house. He remembered street scenes, the fights of artisans, the riotings of drunken folks near the doors of the market inns on the city square opposite the *gymnasium*; and once more came recollections of his grandmother's tears. He heard again the angry mockery of Varavka's phrases about the drunken, crafty and lazy people. It seemed to him that since his affair with Marguerita the people had grown even worse, including the pious, kindly old janitor, Stepan, and the taciturn,

stout Phenya, who tirelessly devoured everything that was sweet.

"The people!" he reflected, laughing inwardly as he listened to his memory prompting him to ardent speeches about a love for the people, about the necessity of working for its enlightenment.

Clim once went to Tomilin to chat with him about the people, went with a secret hope of justifying his antipathy. But Tomilin said, shaking his copper-hued head:

"A sincere interest in the people can be experienced only by industrialists, ambitious people, and socialists. The people is a theme that doesn't interest me."

Tomilin, evidently, was getting rich. He had not only begun to dress more neatly, but the walls of his room were fast becoming filled with new books in three languages: German, French and English.

"There is nothing to read in Russian," he explained. "In Russian they feel interestingly, but think unsuccessfully, dependently, unoriginally. Russian thinking is deeply emotional and, for that reason, coarse. Thought is fertile only when it is moved by doubt. Skepticism is foreign to the Russian intellect, just as it is to the intellect of a Hindu or a Chinaman. With us everybody strives to have faith. It doesn't matter in what — even in salvation through unbelief, let's say. Or Christ. Or chemistry. Or the people. Yet a striving for faith is a striving for peace. We have no men who have condemned themselves to the disquiet of the independent labour of thinking."

Not all these generalities pleased Clim; with some of them he was unable to agree. But he honestly tried to remember everything Tomilin said as he kept time with his talk to the shuffling of his felt slippers and, occasionally, of his bare feet.

"There are no men to whom truth would be necessary for its own self, for the enjoyment of it. I repeat: Man desires truth be-

cause he thirsts after peace. This end is fully satisfied by so-called scientific truths, whose practical significance I do not deny."

10

Once when he arrived at the teacher's he was stopped by the landlord's widow. The chef had died of inflammation of the lungs. The woman sat on the porch waving an acacia branch to drive away the flies from her round, greasy face. She was a massive woman of about forty, with a bust like a wet-nurse's. She rose up in front of Clim, covering the door with her broad back, and, smiling with her sheep's eyes, said:

"Excuse me, he's writing and has ordered that nobody be admitted. I turned away even Father Innokentii. For now even the priests come to him, the one from the seminary and the one from the Church of the Annunciation."

She spoke in a low voice, choking and spluttering over her words; her sheep-like eyes shone with joy, and Clim saw that she was eager to talk at length about Tomilin. Out of politeness he listened to her for some three minutes, and as he made a farewell bow to her she said with a sigh:

"At first I felt sorry for him, but now I'm already afraid."

Frequently, and always at the wrong time, Makarov would turn up, dust covered, in a canvas blouse belted with a broad strap, foot-cloths on his bare feet. His hair had grown long and hung down in wisps. It made him look like a novice in a monastery. His face had become wind-burned and tanned; on his ears and nose the skin was peeling away like fish scales. The sadness had deepened in his eyes, but at times they burned with a strange light that made Clim vaguely apprehensive.

He proceeded cautiously with Makarov, concealing his indigna-

tion against the vagabond slovenliness of his costume, and listening with a condescending irony to his speeches, which had become a bore. Makarov travelled afoot through the villages and visited the monasteries. He talked of them as of a journey to a strange country; but no matter what he talked about, Clim knew that he was thinking about women and love.

"What are you about, are you studying the people?"

"I'm studying myself, of course. Myself, according to the behest of the ancient sages," Makarov answered.

"To study the people — what does it mean? To jot down songs? The country wenches sing the most shameful twaddle. The old men wax reminiscent about certain masses for the dead. No, brother, even without singing it's none too gay," he said. Smoothing with his fingers a crumpled dust-covered cigarette, he continued:

"It seems to me sometimes that the Tolstoians are perhaps in the right: the wisest thing we can do, as Varavka has said, is to return to the status of fools. Perhaps this most authentic wisdom is absurdly simple, and we are vainly turning up our noses in some other direction?"

Clim knew that he could answer these questions only by quoting Tomilin's words, and Makarov would recognize his source. He stayed silent, reflecting that if Makarov could only make up his mind to a liaison with some one like Rita, all his alarms would vanish. Or better still it would be if this shaggy Adonis were to take the seamstress away from Dronov and stop hanging around Lidia. Makarov never asked about her, but Clim saw that as he talked he occasionally tipped his head to one side and looked up at a corner of the ceiling, listening intently.

"He thinks she's arrived," thought Clim, at once amused and annoyed, as Makarov pensively muttered:

" At times it seems that to have understanding is stupid. I have passed the night in the open field on several occasions. You lie on your back; sleep won't come; you look at the stars; you recall books; and suddenly it strikes you — just so, you know, crushing you down — What if this grandeur and incompassibility of Creation is nothing but stupidity and someone's inability to make the universe simple and comprehensible? "

" That sounds like Tomilin," Clim reminded him.

Makarov thought for awhile. He puffed clouds of smoke from his cigarette.

" It makes no difference who said it. But the conclusion is that man is blind to his own reason."

Makarov's dissatisfaction with the universe irritated Clim; Makarov seemed ridiculous in the rôle of philosopher, a clumsy imitation of Tomilin. Clim said angrily without looking at his comrade:

" In two or three years we'll stop thinking about these . . ."

He wanted to say " foolishnesses " or " trifles," but restrained himself and said: " Thinking so naïvely."

Makarov extinguished his cigarette slowly against the sole of his sandal as he queried:

" Shall we join the fools? "

Then, after asking Clim for three roubles, he went away. Clim, watching him walk lightly out of the yard with a swinging stride, felt like shaking his fist at him.

II

On Saturday he left for the country house. As he neared it he saw in the distance his mother, sitting in an armchair near a little pillar of the terrace, and Lidia in a white dress, with a raspberry-coloured scarf over her shoulders. He gave an involuntary start,

sat up straight, and, though the horse was trotting along leisurely, he said to the cabby:

"Go easy."

He was more than a little embarrassed when Lidia, taking his hand gravely, turned her quick sharp glance upon his face. During the two months she had changed decidedly. Her swarthy face had grown darker; her high-pitched, rather harsh voice had become more rich and full.

"The sea is not at all as I had imagined it," she said to Clim's mother. "It's nothing but a dreary watery expanse. The mountains are only a great stone monotony bounded by the sky. At night one feels that the mountains are crawling down towards the houses and want to shove them off into the water, and the sea is all ready to swallow the houses."

Vera Petrovna, glancing down the road leading to the forest, reminded them:

"Nights are not for thinking, but for sleeping."

"It is hard to sleep here; the surf keeps me awake," said Lidia. "The pebbles on the shore grind like teeth when the water washes over them. The sea gulps and swallows like a million swine."

"You're still as . . . nervous . . . as ever," Vera Petrovna said. Her hesitation made Clim suspect that she had wanted to say something else. He realized that Lidia was completely grown up now. Her glance was steady. One might have thought that she was tensely awaiting something. She spoke with an unnatural haste, as if she wished to express as quickly as possible whatever she had to say.

"I don't understand why everybody says that Crimea is beautiful."

Her perversity evidently irritated Clim's mother; he saw her redden and bite her lip.

"The majority of people are but seekers after beauty; only a few create it," he said. "It is possible that in nature beauty is absent, even as in life truth is absent. Truth and beauty are created by man himself. . . ."

Without hearing him to the end, Lidia broke in:

"You've grown older — that is, you've become manly."

Vera Petrovna rose and went inside, saying with unnecessary loudness:

"What you said about beauty was very originally stated, Clim."

Left face to face with Lidia he realized to his amazement that he did not know what to talk about with her. The girl walked the length of the terrace, then asked, looking in the direction of the forest:

"Has my father gone off hunting?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"With a *mouzhik*. With one of the seven whom the governor ordered to be flogged last spring."

"Yes?" asked Lidia. "The *mouzhiks* were raising a riot out there somewhere, too. They were even shot at. Well, I'm going; I'm tired out."

As she stepped from the terrace into the tiny birch grove she said without looking at Clim:

"Luba has gotten a place as companion to a young girl who has tuberculosis."

She disappeared into the birch grove, leaving Clim indignant at her indifference toward him. He sat down in the chair which his mother had occupied. He picked up a yellow French book, Maupassant's novel, *Strong as Death,* slapped his knee with it, and plunged into a torrent of disordered thoughts. Certainly this girl was not meant for an affair like the one he had with Rita. It was impossible to imagine her frail, thin body naked in tem-

pestuous embraces. Then, as he recalled his mother's flush of irritation at Lidia, he was reminded of an incident of the previous week-end between his mother and Varavka. They had been sitting here, on the terrace, and Clim was in his room when he heard his mother saying, almost joyfully:

"My God, you are getting a bald spot!"

Varavka had answered:

"Well, now, I never call attention to the grey hairs on your temples. My eyes are more polite."

"Are you angry?" Clim's mother had asked in amazement.

"Of course not. But there are certain things it isn't very pleasant to be reminded of by a woman. Particularly by a woman who knows so well the customs of French gallantry."

"Why didn't you say 'a beloved woman'?"

"A beloved woman," added Varavka.

Clim recalled Marguerita's words about his mother, and throwing the book to the floor, glanced toward the grove. Lidia's slender, white figure had vanished among the birch trees.

"It's interesting — How will she meet Makarov? And will she understand that I've already fathomed the mysteries of the relationship between man and woman? And if she does realize, will it raise me in her opinion? Dronov used to say that girls and women can always, by certain signs, know when a youth has lost his innocence. Mother said about Makarov: 'One can tell by his eyes that he's a corrupt youth.' Mother, more and more often, introduces her dry phrases with the name of God, although she's pious only for the sake of decorum."

Rocking in his chair, Clim felt more and more confused as he thought of Lidia and wondered why he had been so embarrassed at meeting her again. Then suddenly he knew: he was afraid that Lidia might find out in some way from Pheniya, the chambermaid, about his affair with Marguerita.

"If mother hadn't bribed Marguerita, that wench would have repulsed me," he reflected, clenching his fingers so hard that they cracked. "A rare mother!"

Lidia returned from her stroll unobserved, and when they all sat down to supper they learned that she had already gone to bed. The next day, from morning to evening, she still wandered about uneasily, answering Vera Petrovna's questions none too politely, as if she wanted to start a dispute.

"Have you read this?" Vera Petrovna asked, showing her Maupassant's book.

"Yes — What a dull book!"

"Really? I don't think so."

"What a strange habit reading is," Lidia said. "Just like living at somebody else's expense. And everyone asks the other: 'Sir, have you read this? Madam, have you read this? Have all of you read this?'"

"God knows what you're talking about," Vera Petrovna said, slightly offended. Lidia continued to scoff:

"What cock-sparrow conversation! Of course it's not true that love is 'strong as death.'"

At this Vera Petrovna began to laugh:

"So that's it! Are you speaking from experience?"

"'I can see. People can love five times, and still live on."

Clim kept an uncomfortable silence, expecting that they would quarrel, and feeling timid before Lidia.

12

Late in the evening he went back to town. The little old ramshackle car of the commuters' train swayed and jerked like a peasant's cart. Beyond the window slowly swam the black stream of woods; heat lightnings flared up in the sky. Clim was disturbed

by a premonition of some sort of unpleasantness. The queer girl would break in upon his thoughts of himself and oblige him to think of her, and this was not easy for him. She would not submit to his struggle to comprehend the meaning of the play of her emotions and thoughts. And yet it was unnecessary that she, and all people in general, be understood, like numerals. One must be able to attain certain exact limits and place one's self within them, having exposed and cast off on the way all "thought-up" things that hindered one from living easily and simply — that's what was necessary.

A day later Lidia arrived with her father. Clim went about the place with them, walking over rubbish and shavings around a house covered with scaffoldings on which the plasterers were at work. The iron roofing thundered under the roofer's strokes. Varavka shook his beard angrily and cursed the workers in his memorable phrases:

"They work like coffin-makers — slap-dash, any old way at all."

Lidia snuggled up to her father in an unusually friendly fashion, and walking arm in arm with him, said:

"You, papa, are ready to build a whole city."

"I'm ready!" Varavka agreed. "I'd build ten cities. The city, my dearest, is a beehive. The city gathers and stores the honey of culture. We need to suck into the city half of rural Russia — then we'll begin to live!"

He went on chatting for a bit with Clim and his daughter; then he cursed out the labourers again, tipped them generously, and walked away. Lidia went upstairs to her room and stayed there until evening tea. Then she started to argue teasingly with Tanya Kulikova.

"Why's that interesting?" she challenged one of the poor soul's simple comments.

Tanya Kulikova was greying, drying up, fading, as though she were striving to become altogether invisible.

"How little you young people read; how little you know!" she voiced her consternation. "Our generation. . . ."

"'Generation'—is that from the verb 'to degenerate'?" Lidia interrupted.

The rudeness which Clim had observed in her even when she was a child was now assuming forms which astonished him by their harshness. It was almost impossible to talk with Lidia without being cut off peremptorily. She had often flung the same questions at him:

"And why must this be interesting? And why is it necessary to know this?"

Sometimes at meals she would suddenly lapse into deep thought and sit like a deaf-mute for minutes at a time, then, with a shiver, become unnaturally animated and start teasing Tanya again, asserting that Katin always put on rope sandals when he wrote stories about peasant life: "That's necessary for inspiration!"

As he watched her closely and observed the look of longing in her grey eyes under their frowning brows, as he listened to her too-temptestuous execution of Chopin's or Chaikovsky's lyrical music, Clim decided that she had caught herself against something that irritated her a great deal; she was caught up against this thing as against a briar bush.

"Is she in love?" he wondered; but he did not want to think so. "No, if she were in love, she would probably act differently," he told himself.

VI

I

ON his return from the country house one rainy evening in August Clim found Makarov in his room. He was sitting bent over on a chair, his elbows on his knees, his fingers sunk in his dishevelled hair. At his feet lay his uniform cap, crumpled, faded from the sun. Clim came into the room quietly. Makarov did not stir.

"Drunk," Clim thought, and said reproachfully:

"Fine fellow you are!"

Makarov, without taking his fingers from his hair, wearily raised his head. His features seemed wasted away; his cheeks were swollen, the whites of his eyes bloodshot; but his gaze had a wide-awake glitter.

"The morning after?" asked Clim.

Makarov picked up his cap, placed it on his knees and pressed it down with his elbow; then his head dropped again.

Clim asked him if it had been long since his return from Moscow, and whether he had entered the University. Makarov fingered the pockets of his trousers and answered in a low voice:

"Three days ago. I did enter the University."

"Medical course?"

"Let me alone."

He sat a moment in silence, then got up and went toward the door, his feet lazily shuffling on the floor.

"Going to her?" asked Samghin, looking up at the ceiling.

Makarov also glanced up and, seizing hold of the door-jamb, answered:

"No. Goodbye!"

As he watched Makarov's slow, uncertain walk, Clim was gripped by a thought and emotion in which fear, pity, and evil joy were mingled: "Has he contracted something?"

Phenya rushed into the room and addressed him in a frightened voice:

"The young lady begs you to look after him, not to let him go anywhere."

Her eyes popped out incongruously as she exclaimed in a sing-song voice:

"Wha-at goings on!"

Clim started upstairs and met Lidia as she was running down.

"Why did you let him go? Why?" she demanded in a loud whisper.

In the light of the wall lamp that dimly illuminated the girl's head, Clim saw that her chin was trembling. Her hands pulled nervously at her shawl. She leaned forward suddenly as if she were about to fall.

"Catch up with him, bring him back here!" she shouted, stamping her feet. Frightened as if in a dream, Clim started to run. He rushed through the gate and stopped to listen; it was already dark and very quiet, but he heard no footsteps. He ran toward the street where Makarov lived, and soon, in a gloomy light under the linden trees near the church enclosure, he caught sight of Makarov. The latter was standing, holding with one hand to the wooden railing of the enclosure. His other hand was lifted to his head, and though Clim did not see the revolver in it, he realized that Makarov was about to shoot, and shouted:

"Don't you dare!"

He was but two paces away from Makarov when the latter cried out in a drunken voice:

"Hallelujah! And the devil take it all."

Clim had managed to push him in time, and staggered back, frightened by the sharp bark of the revolver, as Makarov let his hand fall and groaned.

Afterwards, when he recalled the scene, Clim remembered how Makarov swayed, as though deciding which way to fall, and how frightened was the expression in his queerly rounded eyes as he slowly opened his mouth and said:

"There—there, now."

Clim put a supporting arm about his waist, held him up on his legs, and started to lead him away. Makarov's strange gait, uncertain and jostling, yet almost a run, hampered their progress. It seemed a horribly long time before they arrived at the gates of the house. As they came up he grated his teeth and whispered:

"Leave me, leave me!"

On the porch stood three feminine figures. As he caught sight of them he muttered indistinctly:

"I know this is silly."

Tanya Kulikova shook her smooth head reproachfully and whined:

"Aren't you ashamed?"

"Keep still!" Lidia ordered. "Phekla, run for the doctor!"

She grasped Makarov's arm and asked him in a low voice:

"Where did your shot strike, you schoolboy?"

Clim knew that her voice held both anger and contempt.

In his own room, in the light, Clim saw that the left side of Makarov's blouse had grown dark; it shone wetly, and from the chair in which he sat black drops fell to the floor. Lidia was standing silently before him, supporting his head against her breast. Tanya sobbed aloud as she hastened to fix Clim's bed.

"Undress him," Lidia commanded. Clim approached reluctantly. His head was dizzy from the sweetish, sickening odour.

"No, let's lay him down in bed first," Lidia ordered. Clim shook his head negatively; almost fainting, he staggered into the drawing-room and slumped into a chair.

When he had recovered he returned to his room. Makarov lay in Clim's bed, bare to his waist. A grey-haired doctor was bending over him and, with his sleeves rolled back, was poking in Makarov's breast with a long glistening needle as he grumbled:

"Well now, what are you young people about? Forever up to some mischief and shooting yourselves!"

Perspiration gleamed on Makarov's temples and bulging forehead. His nose had become sharp, like a dead man's. He bit his lips and closed his eyes tightly. At the foot of the bed Phenya stood with a copper basin in her hands, and Kulikova, with bandages and lint.

"The Pushkins and Lermontovs had another way of shooting," said the doctor.

Clim walked out into the dining-room. There, at a table, gazing intently at a candle's flame, sat Lidia, her arms crossed on her breast, and her legs stretched out before her.

"Dangerous?" she asked through her teeth and without looking up.

"I don't know."

"Isn't the doctor rather rough?"

Clim poured water into a tumbler and drank it before he replied:

"There you are! They've already begun to shoot themselves about you."

Lidia softly but sternly requested him:

"Stop that."

They were quiet, then, listening. Clim stood near the side-

board, rubbing his hands hard with a handkerchief. Lidia sat motionless, stubbornly contemplating the golden little spear of the candle. Little thoughts were stubbornly mastering Clim:

The doctor had spoken respectfully to Lidia, as to a grown-up lady. This, of course, was because Varavka was becoming more and more prominent in the city. "She will again be the talk of the town," he said to himself, "as she was at the time of her childish love affair with Turoboev; an unpleasant thing, that, putting Makarov in my bed. 'Twould have been better if they'd taken him to the attic. And more peaceful for him, too."

These thoughts were not charitable, and Clim knew it, but still they persisted.

The doctor came in rubbing his eyes and informed them:

"We-ell, everything's as fine as can be. The revolver was rather a poor one. The bullet struck against a rib — slight contusion, I think — and passed through the left lung, stopping just under the skin of the back. I cut it out and presented it to the brave fellow."

While he was speaking he scrutinized Lidia smilingly; but she did not notice as she knocked the thieves from the candle with the handle of a teaspoon. The doctor gave a few bits of advice and made a bow to her, but she did not remark even this. When he had gone away, she said, looking into a corner:

"Tanya and I will watch during the night. You go to sleep, Clim."

Clim was glad to get away; he did not know how to act, or what to say, and he felt the sorrowful expression of his face was changing to a grimace of nervous fatigue.

2

Makarov lay in Clim's room for four days. On the fifth he began begging to be carried home. These days, filled with oppres-

sive and disquieting impressions, Clim had lived through with great difficulty. On the very first day, when he dropped in in the morning to call on the sick man, he had found Lidia there. Her reddened eyes glittered strangely as they studied Makarov's grey, tortured face with its sunken-in eyes. His darkened lips mumbled incoherently. At times his lips curled back and he cried out, gnashing his teeth.

" He's raving," she whispered, waving Clim away. " Go away! "

But Clim lingered for a minute in the doorway and heard the gasping, hoarse voice:

" I'm not to blame. . . . I can't stand it."

Lidia repeated her command:

" Go away! "

Toward evening, Makarov felt better. On the third day he smiled faintly at Clim.

" Excuse me, brother! I've mussed things up here! "

He was embarrassed, and stared at Clim perplexedly out of the dark pits of his eyes as though recalling something incredible. Lidia's demeanour was obviously artificial, and evidently she herself knew it. She uttered trifles, and laughed disproportionately. She astonished everybody with a free-and-easy manner unusual to her; then suddenly she would grow irritated and begin poking fun at Clim:

" You have the tastes of an old man; only old men and old women hang so many photographs on their walls."

Makarov kept silent. Like a stranger or newcomer, he gazed shyly at the ceiling. Even the blouse he wore belonged to someone else — to Clim.

Vera Petrovna and Varavka, arriving from the country house, heard Clim's detailed story. They immediately began to argue in low voices. Varavka stood near the window, beside Clim's mother. He held his beard in his fist and puckered up his face as

though his teeth ached. Clim's mother, sitting before the dresser, was combing her magnificent hair, occasionally tossing her head.

"Lidia's too coquettish," she said.

"Well, that's just an idea of yours! Not a shadow of coquetry."

"The ways of coquetry vary."

"I know, but. . . ."

"Makarov is a youth of loose morals. Clim knows that."

"You're unjust to Lidia!"

Clim listened without saying a word. His mother spoke with increasing haughtiness. Varavka grew angry, began to grumble, and then left them. His mother said to Clim:

"Lidia is cunning. I sense something feral about her. Out of such cold-blooded women are adventuresses developed. Be careful with her."

Clim had known for a long time that his mother disliked Lidia; but this was the first time that she had ever actually expressed her feelings.

"I, of course, understand your comradely feelings; but it would be wiser to send this chap off to a hospital. A scandal in our position in society — you understand, of course. . . . Oh, my God!"

Varavka was stamping about like an elephant in the room above; one could hear his stifled shouting:

"I for-bid it! Non-sense!"

Then Lidia came running down the staircase. Through the window, Clim saw her dart into the garden. After listening patiently to several more of his mother's remarks, he, too, went into the garden, certain that he would find Lidia there insulted and in tears, and that he would have to console her.

But she was seated cross-legged on a bench near an arbour, and greeted Clim with the question:

"You'd never think of shooting yourself because of love, would you?"

She asked it so calmly and brusquely that Clim reflected:

"Can it be that mother is right?"

"As circumstances would dictate," he answered, shrugging his shoulders.

"No, you wouldn't!" she repeated with assurance and, as when they were children, suggested:

"Let's sit awhile."

She gave him a sidelong glance and said thoughtfully:

"You'll probably be a libertine. Such is already the case, I think? Yes?"

Perplexed, Clim had no time to answer. Lidia's face quivered, became distorted. She threw back her head, clutched it in both hands, and wailed:

"How awful this is! — And why? I was born. You were born. Why? What do you think about it?"

Clim preened himself, ready to make a long speech, and a wise one; but she jumped up and left him, saying:

"Never mind. Don't say anything!"

When she was gone, Clim was drawn after her, no longer in order to make sage remarks, but simply to walk by her side. The impulse was so strong that Clim jumped up and started after her, but in the courtyard he heard Alena's low smooth voice:

"Really? Aha — I told you so."

Clim stopped and sat down again reflectively. Yes, most probably Lidia — even Makarov, perhaps — knew some other sort of love, such love as evoked feelings of jealousy and envy in his mother and in Varavka. Clim remembered that neither of them had as much as dropped in on the sick man. Varavka had called in a Red Cross ambulance, and when the internes, who looked like chefs, were carrying Makarov through the yard, Varavka stood near the window, pulling at his beard. He would not allow

Lidia to escort the sick man. Clim's mother — apparently intentionally — had left the house.

In the courtyard Makarov's face at once lighted up. He became animated, and as he looked up into the clear, cold sky, exclaimed:

"Incomparable!"

As he lay in the ambulance, wincing from the heavy jolts, he stroked Clim's knee with his right hand.

"Well, brother, thank you. As for this blood-letting, it may prove beneficial — it calms one."

He smiled feebly as he added:

"Only don't you try it. It's painful, and shameful as well."

He shut his eyes. Their closed dark caverns made his face appear more weirdly blind than those of men blind from birth.

In the tiny grass-grown yard of a toy house which coyly hid its three windows behind a palisade, Makarov was met by a hideously thin man with the face of a clown. He was holding a broom, but as they came up he threw it away and ran to the stretcher. Jostling Clim and the internes, he bent over it angularly, as if he had broken in two, and began in a high voice:

"Eh, Kostiya, *ai-yai-ai!* When Lidia Timopheëvna told us about you we were just dumbfounded. Then she made us happy again. 'It isn't dangerous' says she. Well, glory be to God! Right off we washed and cleaned everything up. Mother dear!" he began shouting, and catching sight of Clim, seized his elbow with his long fingers and introduced himself:

"Zlobin, Peter; working in the postal-telegraph. Very glad to meet you."

A stout red-cheeked old woman in a grey dress that resembled a cassock emerged from the door of a little barn. She stooped over with difficulty and kissed Makarov's brow. Her eyes were full of tears as she scolded:

"Well, what a little fool you are!"

Clim felt touched; but it was amusing to see that such a lanky man and such an enormous old woman lived in a toy house. Its clean little rooms were gay with flowers, and on a little oval table near the wall there lay in solemn pomp a violin in its case. Makarov was put to bed in a cosy sunlit room. Zlobin sat down clumsily on a chair and said to Clim:

"But I, d'you know, because of this occasion, have even allowed myself to study a little piece, *Souvenir de Vilna,* a most charming thing. For three evenings I have practiced it."

This snub-nosed, blue-eyed man whose hair was streaked with grey seemed more and more clown-like to Clim as he watched him. His ponderous mother, ambling like a cow from room to room as she carried carafes and glasses to Makarov's bedside, grumbled as she worked:

"Well, and what good's come of it? You make fools of yourselves, you young people, but later on you'll get tired of doing it."

She offered Clim some tea. He declined, politely, and rose to go, extending his hand to Makarov, who lay silently smiling at the Zlobins.

"Do drop in, please," Makarov said, pressing Clim's hand.

"Do, please!" the Zlobins echoed in one voice.

3

Clim walked sadly into the street. Makarov's quaint friends evidently loved him very much, and living with them was doubtless cosy and simple. Their simplicity made him think of Marguerita. There was one with whom he could have rested well from these recent days' absurd happenings. As he thought of her he suddenly realized that she had grown in his good opinion, that he

had come to think as much of her as he did of Lidia. Yet his thought of Marguerita could not displace that of Lidia.

Whenever Lidia came into his train of thought he could no longer think of anything except her. Actually, he did not even think. In his mind he stood before her and studied the girl without reasoning, as he sometimes watched the movements of clouds and the current of a river. The clouds and the waves erased and washed away all perplexities and brought him a mood of semi-hypnosis devoid of thoughts, of utterance, as this girl did. But when he saw her before him, not in memory but in the flesh, an inimical interest in her would spring up within him; he wanted to dog her every step, to know what she was thinking, to know what she talked about to Alena, and her father. He wanted to expose her somehow or other.

A few days later Lidia asked casually, but, as it seemed to him, provocatively:

"Why don't you drop in at Makarov's?"

He replied that he was very much upset by the attitude which the pedagogical council had taken toward him. Part of its members, hesitating about issuing his certificate of maturity, demanded a re-examination.

"Well, Rzhiga will manage all that," said Lidia carelessly. Her eyes narrowed as she laughed softly and added:

"Don't make me think that you regret having prevented a comrade from killing himself."

She ran away before he had time to answer her. Of course she was jesting; Clim knew that by her expression. But even in the form of a jest her words had stirred him. How in the world could such an insulting thought have been born in her? For a long time Clim intently probed within himself: Had the regret which Lidia suggested actually come to him? His probing was fruitless. He decided to have it out with her, but for the next two days he

could find no opportune occasion to question her. On the third day he went to Makarov, weighed down with an intention not altogether clear to him.

On the threshold of one of the rooms of the toy house he paused with an involuntary smile. Near the wall, on a divan, Makarov was lying with a blanket drawn up to his chest, the unbuttoned collar of his blouse exposing his bandaged shoulder. At a little round table sat Lidia. On the table stood a platter filled with apples. A sunbeam, falling through the upper panes of the window, threw its light on the fruit, on the nape of Lidia's neck, and on half of Makarov's hump-nosed face. The air in the room was scented, and to Clim it seemed very warm. The sick man and the girl were eating apples.

" What a garden of Eden! "

" The third in paradise was the devil," Lidia flashed back, and moved away a little from the divan, chair and all. Makarov, as he pressed Clim's hand, followed up her jest:

" Samghin resembles Faust more than he does Mephistopheles."

Both quips annoyed Clim. They put him on the alert. Makarov and Lidia, tossing their badinage lightly to and fro, became more and more caustic. He was clumsy in returning their biting jests, and grew confused. It seemed to him that in their voices he detected the vexation and irritation of people who had been interrupted. Despondency and resentment welled up in him. The man whom he had hindered from killing himself was far too merry, and had even become handsomer than ever. The pallor of his face successfully accentuated the warm glitter of his eyes. The dark down on his upper lip had become thicker, more noticeable, and curiously enough, Makarov during these few days had matured astonishingly. Even his voice, though it was feeble, was deeper. Lidia's attitude toward him was one of unnatural simplicity, without the hauteur and provocativeness so

habitual to her; and although Clim noticed that with him too she was somewhat kindlier today, he was displeased by her new manner.

"It's charming here, isn't it?" She turned to Samghin, making an all-embracing gesture with her hand. Clim answered:

"Just the ordinary thing — middle-class."

"Just think — what an aristocrat!" said Makarov, placing his hand over his face as if to screen it from the sun. Lidia smiled too. But Clim quickly visualized her future to himself. He saw her married to Makarov, who taught in the *gymnasium,* and was a drunkard, of course. She was already pregnant with her third child, walking about in night slippers, the sleeves of her blouse rolled up to her elbows, in her hands a dirty rag with which she dusted off the chairs like a chambermaid. Infants with red back sides were crawling about the floor and whining. This picture was beginning to lift him out of his depressed mood when Peter Zlobin's old mother looked in at the doorway and invited them:

"I beg you to partake of tea! Today I have your favorite wafers, Lidia Timopheëvna!"

Lidia ran up to her and began chattering, smoothing with her thin, little fingers a grey lock of hair which had fallen on the old woman's red-veined cheek. She shook with laughter at Lidia's remarks. Clim could not hear what Lidia was saying. He merely shrugged his shoulders in answer to Makarov's question:

"Why do you look so much like an owl?"

"So that's how things stand!" he was thinking. "That means that she's been coming here for some time, and often. Is she on a family footing here? And if so, why did Makarov shoot himself?"

With irresistible persistency the thought whirled through his head that Makarov was living with Lidia, just as he himself had

lived with Marguerita; and, as he eyed them from under his brows, he was mentally shouting: "Liars! Hypocrites!"

Zlobin, who was seated beside him, nudged him with his bony shoulder, and declared that he loved only music and his little mother.

"It was because of this love that I never married, for, you know, a third person in the house — why it's already a hindrance! And not every wife would be able to stand violin exercises. I practice every day. Mother dear has grown so used to it that she no longer hears me. . . ."

4

When he left these people Clim was so depressed that he did not even offer to escort Lidia home. She ran out to the gate as he was leaving and asked him sweetly:

"You won't say anything at home about my having been here, will you?"

He shook his head. He did not want to go home. He started toward the bank of the river and, walking along slowly, reflected:

"I ought to smoke; they say it's soothing."

Beyond the river, above the smoothly flat earth, a rosy sunset cloud had inverted itself like a shallow goblet, reminding him somehow of the clean little toy house and the people in it.

"How stupid everything is!"

At home he found Varavka and his mother in the dining-room. The enormous table was cluttered up with a mass of papers. Varavka was snapping the bone counters of the abacus and buzzing into his beard:

Zh-Zhuliki! [16]

Clim's mother was swiftly transferring figures from little squares of paper to a large clean sheet. Before her was a platter

holding an enormous watermelon; in front of Varavka was a bottle of sherry.

" Well, how's your marksman? " asked Varavka.

After hearing Clim's reply he studied him dubiously, then poured himself a full goblet of wine, drank half of it, licked his fleshy lip, and started to talk, leaning back in his chair and tapping his fingers on the edge of the table:

" The universe is divided into people who are cleverer than I — those I don't like; and people who are more stupid than I — of those I am contemptuous."

Clim's mother, glancing searchingly at him, asked:

" Why do you say this, all of a sudden? "

" Out of necessity," Varavka answered, picking up with his fork a chunk of watermelon and thrusting it into his mouth. " But there is yet another category of people I fear," he continued, aggressively. " They are the good Russian folk, those who believe that through the logic of words it is possible to influence the logic of history. I advise you, Clim, in all friendliness: beware of believing a good Russian man. He's a deucedly charming fellow — yes! To chat with him about the future is a sheer delight. But the present he doesn't understand at all, and he doesn't realize how mournful is his rôle of an infant that, walking dreamily in the middle of the street, is going to be run over by horses, inasmuch as the heavy dray of history is drawn by horses driven by experienced, but not at all polite, drivers. Our good folk in this business of history are entirely extraneous. At best, they serve as plaster ornaments on the façade of the building under construction. But, since the building is still in the process of erection, therefore . . ."

Clim's mother cut short Varavka's speech rebelliously:

" However, remember that Christ . . ."

" Also a premature phenomenon and, for that reason, harmful,"

continued Varavka, beating time to his words by thumping the table with his thick fingers. " The so-called ' Christian culture ' is something that resembles an iridescent spot of naphtha on a broad turbid river. Culture, for the nonce, consists of books, little pictures, a little music, and very little science. The cultural state of a small group of people who call themselves ' the salt of the earth,' ' the knights of the spirit,' and so forth, is expressed merely in that they do not obscenely swear aloud about their mothers, and that when speaking of the water-closet, they do so with irony. All those who live ' in Christ ' are deeply anticultural, according to my conception of the meaning of culture. Culture, my dear, is a love of work, but a love just as untameably alive as a love of woman."

Varavka, having hastily lit a cigarette, went on talking as he exhaled clouds of blue smoke. The leather-like skin of his forehead took on a reddish sheen in the smoke; his sharp little eyes glittered animatedly behind a thick veil of it; his fox-brush beard showed dimly through it; even his words seemed to come out of the smoke. To Clim these attacks of eloquence from Varavka were thoroughly familiar; they came on days when his business had been especially fatiguing. Clim noticed that people bowed to Varavka on the street with ever increasing respect, though he knew that at home they spoke of him more and more maliciously. He had also remarked a strange coincidence: the more and the worse they spoke of Varavka in the city, the more wildly and fluently he philosophized at home.

Today the attack was unbearably prolonged. Varavka even unbuttoned the lower buttons of his waistcoat, as he sometimes did after dinner. A ruddy smile flashed through his beard. The chair under him creaked. Clim's mother listened to him intently, bending so far over the table that her girlish breasts lay on the edge of it. The sight was unpleasant to Clim.

" Allow me, allow me," Varavka shouted at her, " Why, then, this love for mankind — incidentally, a mere invention of ours, opposed to our nature which craves not love for our fellow-man, but a struggle with him — this miserable love means nothing and is worth nothing without hatred, without aversion, for that filth in which our fellow-man lives. And, finally, one mustn't forget that spiritual life is successfully developed only in a soil of material wellbeing."

Clim felt in his breast and in his head a dull ennui that was almost a pain. It was a new sensation to him. He sat beside his mother and ate watermelon lazily as he wondered: " Why does everybody philosophize, anyhow? " It seemed to him that lately people had begun to philosophize more broadly and hastily than ever. He had been glad in the spring, when, under the pretense that the wing of the house was in need of repair, Katin the writer had been requested to vacate his apartment. Now, when he walked through the courtyard, he looked at the shuttered windows of the wing with pleasure.

Often it seemed to him that he was so engulfed by the words of others that he could no longer think for himself. Every man, as though afraid of something, as though seeking an ally in him, strove to din into his ears something of his own. Everybody regarded him as a likely recipient of opinions, and buried him in the sand of words. This always depressed and irritated Clim. Today he felt it more than ever.

Phenya came in to announce that the contractor had arrived.

" Aha! " Varavka ejaculated angrily. He jumped to his feet and went out, walking with heavy but rapid tread, as a bear walks. Clim also got up, but his mother, taking him by the arm, led him off to her room, asking him:

" You evidently were very much stirred up by this affair of Lidia's? "

She walked up and down the room, repeating in a low voice her judgments, so familiar to Clim, about Lidia and Makarov. Her son listened to her speech, the speech of one convinced that she always said just the right and needful things, and nothing unreasonable or superfluous. Suddenly he thought: "But how does her love and Varavka's differ from the love Marguerita knows, and preaches?" He realized immediately the deep cynicism of such a comparison, and felt that he was unfair to his mother. He kissed her hand and said, without looking into her eyes:

"Don't be alarmed, mother! And — forgive me, I'm so tired."

She kissed his forehead effusively and said:

"I realize that, understanding so much, your position is not at all easy."

In his own room, throwing off his jacket, he reflected that it would be a good thing if he could throw off in the same way his penetration, all his tangled emotions and thoughts, and live simply, as others lived, uttering every stupid commonplace remark that came to his tongue, forgetting all the superaphorisms of Tomilin and Varavka — and forgetting about Dronov.

5

He slept badly and got up early, feeling miserable. When he went into the dining-room for his coffee he found Varavka gnawing toast and washing it down with port wine in preparation for the day's struggle.

"Listen," he said quietly, contracting his eyebrows, and gripping Clim's hand with an intensity that foreboded something unpleasant.

"Yesterday I didn't tell you about Dronov, because I didn't want to worry Vera, and besides I couldn't find the time. Cosmin,

the justice of the peace, didn't know that Dronov was no longer in my employ, and so gave me warning that the rascal has appropriated some girl's savings-bank book and that a complaint had been made against him. There's some sort of curious mix-up about it. The judge expressed it mildly by 'appropriated,' but it's evident that it amounts to theft, and what's worse, it doesn't come within the jurisdiction of a justice of the peace inasmuch as the amount is above three hundred roubles. That means the circuit court. What are your relations to the lad? Aha! You've parted with him? I'm very glad!"

Clim, too, felt glad, and in order to conceal his feeling, he let his head drop. He thought he heard within him a second triumphant "Aha!" Petty thoughts crowded into his mind, and among them flashed the warm thought of Marguerita.

Varavka, having mistaken his joy for fright, uttered a few consoling platitudes:

"Well, what of it. One can never be sure of a man's decency. We choose our friends more carelessly than we choose our shoes. Hear this: a man without friends is more of a man."

He concluded with self-satisfaction:

"I have no friends."

Then a feeling of gratitude for the pleasure Varavka had given him, impelled Clim to tell him that Lidia was frequently at Makarov's. To his amazement Varavka did not become angry. He looked apprehensively in the direction of Clim's mother's rooms and said in a low voice:

"Yes, yes. I know. Romanticism — the devil take it! But at that, romanticism, you know, is better than . . ."

Making an indeterminate gesture with his right hand, he tucked a bulging portfolio under his arm and asked very softly:

"You didn't mention this to your mother? No? Well, don't, I

beg of you. Even without that they aren't any too fond of each other. I'm off."

But as soon as he had gone, Clim's joy was gone too. It disappeared with the realization that he had not acted honourably in telling Varavka about his daughter. Although usually incapable of quick decisions, he hurried upstairs two steps at a time.

Lidia, unkempt in an orange-coloured negligée, slippers on her bare feet, was sitting in a corner of the divan with a portfolio of music in her hands. Leisurely covering her legs with the skirt of her robe, she glared at Clim.

"What happened? Why such an expression?" she asked unkindly.

He sat down on the edge of the divan and, fearing that he would not say what he wanted to unless he spoke at once, he blurted out:

"Forgive me, but I inadvertently let slip . . ."

Lidia, throwing down the music in her lap, stopped him:

"I know. I thought you'd tell my father. Perhaps for that very reason I asked you not to say anything, in order to try you out, to see if you'd say anything. But yesterday I told him myself. You're too late."

Her voice and eyes were contemptuous. Clim kept silent, feeling anger rising within him as the girl went on wonderingly:

"I don't understand you. You seem to be decent, but somehow or other you're forever leaping in the wrong direction. What does it mean?"

Clim roused by the contempt in her voice, jumped from the divan, and immediately a quarrel started. Clim said in the tone of an older person:

"It means that I don't see anything good in your conduct. . . ."

"How funny you are," answered the girl, moving into a corner of the divan and tucking her legs under her.

"Your affair with Makarov . . ."

Lidia opened her eyes wide in angry amazement.

"My conduct? An affair? How dare you, you schoolboy? You imagine . . ."

She stopped, evidently not finding the strength to finish her sentence. Her swarthy face reddened darkly. Tears came into her eyes. She threw her slight body on her knees and gasped:

"You think . . ."

Then a flood of almost incoherent words broke over him, and Clim suddenly became frightened at her wrath. He did not understand very well what she was trying to say, and he wished one thing only: to stop the torrent of her words, that were becoming more harsh and disconnected. She prodded his forehead with a finger, compelling him to raise his head, and looking into his eyes she asked him:

"Can it be possible that you seriously think that I — that Makarov and I have such relations? And don't you understand that I don't want this — that it was for this very reason that he shot himself? Don't you understand that?"

Clim felt on his forehead the sharp prod of the girl's finger, and it seemed to him that he had never before experienced such an insult. Lidia was saying things very silly and childish, but she was acting as though she thought herself a grown-up woman. He looked at her pained face and sorrowful eyes. He wanted to say something cutting, but no words would come to him. In silence he went off to his room, and there, feeling a bitter dryness in his mouth and a disconnected noise of angry words in his head, he took his stand at the window, watching the wind tearing the leaves off the trees. In the glass he saw the dim reflection of his face, and though its features were vague, still they recalled to him the grave and pompous face of his mother.

With all the resolution he could muster, Clim demanded to

know of himself what was genuine, and what affectation, in his feelings for Lidia? Only with difficulty and after some time could he unravel the tight skein of his feelings: there was the dismal sensation of having lost something very important; a sharp dissatisfaction with himself; a desire to avenge himself on Lidia for her insult; a sexual curiosity about her; and, in addition to all this, an intense desire to convince the girl of his importance. At the end he came to the unescapable conclusion that he loved Lidia with a real love, the kind of love written about in verses and in prose, in which there was nothing of the puerile, the amusing, the affected.

He sighed with relief and continued his reasoning: If Lidia loved Makarov, out of a feeling of gratitude she should have changed her haughty attitude toward the man who had saved the life of her beloved. Yet he had heard never a word of gratitude from her. That was strange. Today she had said something incomprehensible: Makarov had shot himself out of fear for love — that was all he could make out of her words. But more truthfully it could be said that this fear dwelt in Lidia herself. Clim rapidly recalled the succession of signs which had convinced him that such was exactly the state of affairs. Lidia was afraid of love. She had inculcated this fear in Makarov, and therefore was guilty of having caused a man to attempt suicide. This deduction was comfortable. Having reviewed once more the course of his thoughts, Clim raised his head and even smiled, feeling that he was a strong man, and could quickly overcome unpleasantnesses.

He decided to deal magnanimously with Lidia, as do the nobler heroes of novels, those who, loving, forgive everything. This was the second time he had been forced to assume such a position. But this time it occurred to him that such a rôle was making him even less noticeable in Lidia's eyes. Scrutinizing himself in the mirror he saw that a lyrical, pensive mien made his face

insignificant. He was dissatisfied with his face; its features seemed too small to reflect all the complexity of his soul. His nearsightedness caused him to narrow his eyes; their pupils, through the glass of his spectacles, seemed unpleasantly expanded. He did not care for his nose; it was straight, but not large enough. His lips were thin; his chin too sharp; his moustache grew in two light little bushes only at the corners of his lips. When he frowned, contracting his sparse eyebrows, his face became more interesting and intelligent. He was obliged to deny himself the lyrical mien.

6

He began reading Lermontov. The strong bitterness of the poems seemed to help him. More and more often he quoted the gloomy poet's most caustic lines.

He attempted, in talking to Lidia, to preserve his former tone of speaking to a little girl whose delusions were not understood by him even if he did consider them amusing. In Varavka's and his mother's presence he succeeded in sustaining this pose, but when left alone with her he lost it at once.

Lidia was going off to Moscow, but she was getting ready without much hurry or eagerness. Listening to Varavka's conversation with Clim's mother, she scrutinized them with her searching glance as if they were strangers to her, and, evidently not agreeing with what she heard, tossed her head with its cap of curly hair.

Makarov, having recovered, had already gone off to the university with a rather suspicious haste. Bidding farewell to Clim, he squeezed his hand hard, but said only two words:

"Thanks, Brother."

After Makarov's departure it seemed to Samghin that Lidia began even more noticeably than ever to avoid meeting him face to face. Her eyes, now, were cold with an angry and dismal light;

but she seemed even more like a child than she had been several weeks ago. Clim noticed that she was talking with his mother less distantly than hitherto, and that his mother, too, was gentler toward Lidia. There was something disturbing in the fact that she sometimes came to his mother's room and that they sat there, quietly talking. One night about midnight, after a boring game of Preference with Varavka and his mother, Clim had gone to his own room. A few minutes later his mother had entered, in a lilac negligée and night slippers. She sat on the sofa, and began speaking with concern, playing with the tassels of her girdle.

"During the summer you've somehow wilted, have become languid, and not like yourself at all."

He stayed silent, twisting the little tufts of his moustache, thinking that this was an opening to a serious conversation. Nor was he mistaken. With a directness that was almost coarse, his mother looked at him calmly and told him that she had perceived his infatuation for Lidia. Feeling himself blushing, Clim smiled and asked:

"Aren't you mistaken?"

As though she had not heard his question, she continued:

"Love at your age, it isn't the sort of love which — it isn't really love yet. No!"

After a moment's silence, she sighed:

"I married your father when I was only eighteen, and after two years knew that it was a mistake."

She became silent again, evidently finding it difficult to express what she wanted to say. Clim listened absent-mindedly, hearing a phrase now and then as he tried to answer the question that arose within him: Why did his mother's words make him indignant?

"My relation to her father," he heard her say, as he was considering in what words he could best remind her that he was now a grown man.

He spoke up suddenly, frowning:

"My attitude toward Lidia is comradely, and naturally I am somewhat frightened by her mix-up with Makarov — a man, of course, who is unworthy of her. Perhaps I spoke to her somewhat hotly and with too little restraint. I think that's all there is to it, and that everything else is nothing but imagination."

As he said the words he was certain he was not lying, and knew that he spoke well. Thinking that there was need of adding something else, something weighty, he said:

"You know only man exists; everything else rises in his imagination. This, I believe, was stated by Protagoras."

Narrowing her eyes just a bit, his mother answered:

"It's not wholly true, but it's wisely said. You have a splendid memory. And, of course, you're right: girls always run somewhat ahead, imagining the inevitable. You have reassured me. Timophei and I have found so much of value in the relations that have sprung up and are constantly becoming stronger between us."

Clim nodded his head, confused by his mother's frank egoism, comprehending at this moment that she was only a woman, apprehensive and alarmed about her happiness. He asked:

"It seems to me that you have become kindlier toward Lidia?"

"You know my viewpoint; it cannot change," his mother answered, rising and kissing him. "Go to sleep!"

She went away, leaving a disturbing trail of sweet perfumes behind her. A slight scoffing smile lingered on the lips of her son.

Conversation with her always strengthened Clim's opinions of himself. They were strengthened not so much by words as by her firmly confident tone. After listening to her he found that actually everything was very simple, and that one could live at one's ease, cosily. His mother lived only within herself, and she did not live badly. She did not "think up" anything.

Of course it was natural to imagine certain things, in order to add salt to life when it is too tasteless, to add sweetening to it when it is bitter; but one must find the exact mean. And there are emotions which, if one fans them, become dangerous. Such an emotion, of course, is love for woman, when, as in Makarov's fiasco, it becomes responsible for the firing of an inaccurately sighted pistol. It is well known that love is an instinct, even as hunger is; but whoever kills himself because of hunger, or thirst, or nakedness?

Whenever Clim had such ideas, face to face with himself, as it were, he felt more intelligent, stronger, and more of an individual than anyone he knew, and gradually there was born in him a condescending attitude toward others, an attitude not devoid of a smiling irony which he secretly found pleasing. Even Varavka sometimes roused such a feeling of superiority; even though he was a man of business, he was nevertheless an eccentric chatterbox.

7

Clim had received, finally, his certificate of maturity, and was getting ready to go off to Peterburg when Marguerita once more crossed his path. One foggy evening he had set out for Tomilin's to bid him goodbye. As he was passing an unpretentious house, a merchant's, a woman descended from its porch to the sidewalk. He immediately recognized Marguerita. The meeting did not surprise him. He had felt that he was fated to meet the seamstress again, and had been anticipating such a chance meeting; but now that it had come about, he concealed his delight from her.

They talked guardedly of unimportant things. Marguerita reminded him that he had acted impolitely toward her. They walked slowly. She looked at him out of the corners of her eyes, her lips pouting, and frowned. He tried to be genial and kindly

with her. As he chatted, looking amiably into her eyes, he was thinking: how could he suggest to her that she invite him to her place?

He was drawn to her by a desire to experience again her caresses. Moreover, an important idea had just occurred to him. He asked her about Dronov's theft charge.

" There was nothing of the sort," she retorted, " he didn't steal the book at all."

And calmly, briefly, she told him:

" He himself was ashamed to save his money, so he put it into the savings bank on my book. But when we quarrelled . . ."

" What about? "

" Well, what do men quarrel with women about? About men, or about women, of course. He began asking me for his money, but I played a joke on him and didn't give it to him. Then he stole the book from me, and I had to make a statement about it to the justice of the peace. Then Vanka gave the book back to me. That's all there is to it."

As they came to the corner of a narrow little alley, dark with fog, she suggested:

" Want to come in? I'm living in a new place. We'll have some tea."

In a small crowded room much like her former one which Clim had known, he passed some four hours with her. Her kisses seemed more ardent, hungrier than they had been before, but her caresses failed to intoxicate Clim to the extent of making him forget what he wanted to discover. He approached the real question indirectly by availing himself of a moment of her fatigue to ask first about something that did not really interest him:

" How have you been living? "

The question amazed her.

" Why, I've been living just like everybody else! "

Then, as Clim questioned her insistently, she moved away from him a bit, and after a yawn, making the sign of the cross over her mouth, said:

"I lived, like all girls: in the beginning I didn't understand anything; then I understood that one had to love you fellows. Well, so I up and fell in love with one. He wanted to marry me, but thought better of it."

She said this calmly, with no trace of vindictiveness, and closed her eyes. Clim, stroking her cheek, her neck and her shoulder, asked his question very gently:

"And how did you become a woman?"

"Just as everybody else does," the woman answered, shrugging her shoulder, her eyes still closed.

"Were you — afraid?"

"What of?"

"The first time — the first night?"

After thinking awhile, as though trying to remember, Marguerita licked her lips.

"It was in the daytime, not at night; on All Saints' Day, in the cemetery."

She opened her eyes and began to push back the strands of hair that had fallen over her ears and cheeks. Clim thought there was a curious haste about her gestures. He was annoyed by her unwillingness, or inability, to tell him the usual manner of seduction, though he had assuredly asked his questions plainly enough.

"It's a very usual matter! Your head turns, and then — goodbye, girlie!"

She would say nothing more about the technique, but willingly began to acquaint him with the theory. She even sat up in bed in order to talk more comfortably.

"Someone told me that your comrade shot himself with a pistol. Lots of men shoot themselves on account of girls and

women. Women-folk are low-down and unreliable. And there is something stubborn about them — I couldn't describe it to you. The man's all right and he's to her liking, but — he's not the one. He's not the one, not because he's poor, or because he's homely. He's all right, but — he's just not the one! "

As she plaited her hair she spoke more and more thoughtfully:

" When you decide to marry, choose a girl of character. Those with the most character are stupid. You can't help but see through them, and they give themselves away every time they open their mouths. But the quiet, modest ones — be on your guard against them; that sort will fool you at every turn."

Her expression suddenly changed: the pupils of her eyes contracted like a cat's, her narrow, intent gaze was fixed and distant, as if she were vengefully recalling the past. It seemed to Clim that formerly when she had spoken of women it was not with malice, but as if she were talking about distant relatives from whom there was nothing to expect, neither good nor bad, who did not interest her and were half-forgotten. As he listened to her he felt once more that all the people he knew seemed to have conspired together in an effort to get ahead of him; they desired to be cleverer than he, to be more incomprehensible. They were resorting to crafty subterfuge and were hiding behind their words. Yes, they actually wanted to be incomprehensible, fearing that otherwise Clim Samghin would solve the enigmas of their selves.

But Marguerita was saying:

" I can't even believe that there have been sainted women — unless they were old maids: sainted, all right, but probably virgins who had never been touched."

As Marguerita's chatter mingled with his thoughts, Clim still waited hopefully for her to tell how her fears as a virgin receiving her first lover had been conquered. Suddenly he was aware that

Marguerita's words had something in common with Varavka's lively speeches, and even with Tomilin's wisdom.

Tired of listening to her, Clim said wearily:

"You're in a philosophical mood tonight."

Marguerita looked herself over quickly and asked:

"In a what?"

When he had explained his words, she said:

"Oh, but I thought that you'd seen blood — it's time I was having my period."

Shuddering with aversion, Clim jumped from the bed. The girl's simplicity had often before seemed to him shameless and offensive, but he had put up with it. Now he went away from her with a feeling of deep disgust, and condemned himself for his profitless visit. He was glad that he was going up to Peterburg the next day. Varavka had persuaded him to enter the Institute of Engineers, and had made all the necessary arrangements for Clim's matriculation.

The night was coldly humid and black. The street lamps burned dismally, as though hopeless of ever penetrating the thick darkness. Clim felt depressed, and empty of thoughts. But suddenly there came to him the stimulating conception that a generic relationship existed between Varavka, Tomilin, and Marguerita. Each of them lectured, warned, frightened, but behind the bravado of their words fear lurked. Fear of what? Fear of whom? Could it be fear of him — a man who, solitary and fearless, walked through the darkness of night?

VII

I

GRADUALLY and subtly there had grown in Clim Samghin's mind the unfriendly picture of Peterburg common to all provincials. But Peterburg was not like most Russian towns. It was a city of hardened, mistrustful, and very shrewd people; it was the head of the enormous body of Russia, filled with a brain that was cold and sinister. At night, in the railway carriage, Clim remembered Gogol and Dostoievski.

He arrived at the capital with his mind made up to be on his guard with people, certain that they would immediately begin to put him to the test, to study him, to infect him with their beliefs.

A heavy fog enveloped the city, and although it was not later than three in the afternoon, the iridescent bubbles of lamps striving to light up Nevski Prospect loomed out of the dusk like huge dandelions. The clammy, wet air moistened his face, an acrid odour of smoke tickled his nostrils. Clim bent his neck and hunched up his shoulders as he stared to the right and left through the dampened window-panes into the stores, so brightly lit inside that they seemed to be trafficking in summer sunbeams. He was not used to the muffled noise of a city. The beats of horses' hooves on the wooden roadway were too soft and dull; the swishing of rubber and iron tires on the wheels of carriages was almost soundless. The voices of the people, too, sounded muffled and monotonous. It was strange not to hear the clicking of horseshoes over cobbles, the crackling and rumbling of light victorias,

the lively shouts of vendors. And there was no pealing of church bells.

On the sidewalks, covered with wet mud, the people passed at an unnaturally rapid gait, and all of them looked alike. The grey stone houses, too, were almost indistinguishable from one another. They were not divided off by fences, but pressed closely together like one great endless building. The ground storey of each, brightly lighted, was pressed down to the earth and squeezed into it; the darkened upper storeys rose into the grey fog beyond which one could not even sense the sky.

Among these tall houses pedestrians, horses, and policemen were smaller and more insignificant than in the province, they were quieter and more submissive. Clim visualized this city as a vast aquarium, wherein the people were like fishes, submerged, trying to rise to a clear surface from a depth of water clogged with rotting débris.

In small groups the people paused for a few moments under the lamps. The light gleamed momentarily on the yellow blurs of their faces under black hats and dark umbrellas.

The crowd's nervous haste conveyed an impression of futility: all these hundreds and thousands of little egos, meeting and parting, were running each to its own goal — probably a worthless one, but all-important to each individual seeker. One imagined that the stinging fog was the hot breath of the people, and that everything in the town had burst into a sweat as a result of their frantic chasing about. Clim feared that in this great mass of seething ant-like people, his own individuality might be lost, and he remembered one of Varavka's numerous maxims, a particularly menacing one:

"The majority of the people are bound to submit meekly to the purpose for which they are created and intended — that of being the raw material of history. For them — as for oakum, for

instance — it isn't necessary to consider the thickness and soundness of the rope to be woven from the material, nor for what purpose it will finally be used."

"I was foolish to submit to mother's and Varavka's urging; it was useless for me to come here to this gasping city," Clim mused, irritated with himself. "Perhaps mother's advice concealed a plan to keep me away from Lidia. If that's true, then it's ridiculous. They've already handed Lidia over to Makarov."

His thoughts were interrupted when he observed, suddenly, that all around the lamps there trembled opal bubbles that looked as if they were just about to explode. These bubbles were caused by minute dust-motes floating through the fog, which, when they ceaselessly came near the area of the lamps, just as ceaselessly leapt away from that area. The curious action of the dust-motes was unbearably irritating to the eyes. Clim became obsessed with a desire to find a simile for the phenomenon, and, having covered it with a suitable simile, to dismiss it from his mind completely.

He took off his dampened spectacles. At once the globes of liquid opal lost some of their colour, became nebulous, but even more disturbing, and the light, dimming, receded deeper into their centers. Varavka's hackneyed comparison, "A city is a beehive," was useless. These spectral fires were more aptly extinguished by the words of the heavy-browed compiler of popular scientific books. Once, in the wing of the house, at Katin's, he had excitedly tried to prove that man's thought and will are electro-mechanical phenomena, and that concentration of a will upon an idea can create miracles; exactly by such concentration the more dynamic epochs were to be explained: the Crusades, the Renaissance, the great French Revolution, and similar explosions of the energy of the will.

In the Square of the Senate the wet, glistening statue of the stormy Czar[17] was illuminated by just such opal bubbles. With

one bronze hand the Czar was pointing out the road to the West, beyond the broad river. Over the river the fog was even more dense and chill. Clim felt that this should remind him of verses from *The Brazen Horseman,* but found himself recalling *Poltava* instead:

His fearful gesture and his glance
Against the Swedes his troops advance.

Then by some trick of memory Goethe's ballad of *The Erl-King* came to his mind:

Who gallops, who dashes, through the cold gloom:
A horseman belated. . . .

Horseshoes beat on the wood of the bridge over a black and restless river. The cabby, having halted his horse before the blank front of a house in one of the rows of the Vasilievski Island, said in a sombre tone:

"You ought to add something on, young gentleman!"

"Why 'young gentleman'?" reflected Clim; he did not tip the driver. A little old doorman with moustaches like a Chinaman's, medals on his receding chest, and a little black cap on his bare skull, said in a business-like tone:

"The Premirova apartment is on the second floor, Number 4."

He pointed toward a corner, where a plump chambermaid in a white apron stood at the foot of a red stone staircase covered with a grey, red-bordered carpet. The staircase reminded Clim of the *gymnasium,* the chambermaid, of a Dresden shepherdess.

She said brightly:

"Your room is to the right along this corridor — the first door. Your brother's room is also to the right — the corner one."

"My brother's?" Clim asked in amazement.

"Dmitri Ivanovich's," said the chambermaid, as though she were apologizing. She seized the two grips and stood up between them. "You're Mr. Samghin?"

"Yes," Clim answered glumly, wondering why his mother had not told him he was to live in the same apartment with his brother. Before going to his own room he knocked peremptorily at Dmitri's door. From the other side a gay voice replied to the knock:

"Come in please!"

Dmitri was lying on a cot. His left foot was bandaged up. In his blue trousers and embroidered blouse he resembled an actor in some Ukrainian troupe. Raising his head, propped with one hand against the bed, he stammered wonderingly:

"Is it — is it Clim? You?"

He held out both hands to his brother and cried joyously:

"Well, this is a surprise!"

Samghin beheld a stranger. Dmitri's eyes alone recalled the youth that he had been four years before this meeting; the eyes were still lit with the smile Clim had always thought womanish. Dmitri's round, soft face was now covered with a light beard; his long hair curled at the ends. Gaily and rapidly he told Clim that he had moved over here five days before because he had smashed his foot and Marina had brought him over.

"She's been threatening me for a long time now. 'Expect a surprise!' Who's Marina? She's a niece of Premirova's. Her aunt is a darling too, a liberal; she's a distant relative of Varavka's."

2

Dmitri's animation vanished when he began to ask about their mother, about Varavka, about Lidia. Clim felt a bitter taste

in his mouth, a heaviness in his head; answering his brother's conventional apathetic questions was a bore. The yellowish fog beyond the window, with telegraph wires running through it, recalled fading paper with music staves laid out on it. The dark grey wall of a three-storey house, thickly plastered over with patches of numerous signs, emerged dimly through the fog.

"Well, and how is Uncle Jacob? Sick? Hm . . . At a soirée recently a certain writer, a *narodnik*, talked to us interestingly about him. What an existence he's had! An existence, really, and not a life. You of course know that he's been arrested again in Saratov?"

Clim had not known it, but nodded his head affirmatively.

"The *narodniki* are stirring again," said Dmitri, so approvingly that Clim wanted to smile. He studied his brother apathetically, as one would a stranger; and his brother in his turn talked of their father as one would discuss a stranger who was nevertheless an amusing chap.

"You wouldn't know him. He's staid now and tries to speak in a baritone. He carries on a trade in oak barrel-staves and the like with Frenchmen and Spaniards; he rolls about Europe, and eats an awful lot. He was here in the spring, but right now he's in Dijon."

He hopped about the room on one leg, supporting himself by holding on to the backs of chairs. His soft, thick lips wore an amiable smile. Thrusting a crutch under his armpit he said:

"Let's go and have some tea. Should you change? It's not necessary — you're well dressed as you are."

Clim nevertheless went to his room. His brother, thumping with his crutch, accompanied him and kept up an incessant stream of talk with a joyfulness Clim could not understand and which confused him.

"Well, that's enough. You're bewitching — let's go!"

In the warm, pleasant half-light of a rather small room, at a table near the samovar, sat a tiny old woman with her hair smoothly combed back, and spectacles on her sharp rosy little nose. She extended to Clim a gray, monkey-like paw, tied near the wrist with a bit of red wool, and said, lisping like a little girl:

"Tho pleathed."

She cried out in pain when Clim squeezed her hand; her rheumatism was bad, she explained. She hastened to ask him about Varavka, but was interrupted by the entrance of a magnificent girl who came up fanning her face with the tip of her thick yellow braid.

"Marina Premirova," she introduced herself to Clim. Her voice was a deep alto.

Sitting down beside Dmitri, she announced:

"The streets are royally muddy!"

It seemed to Clim that the room became suddenly cramped. With an abrupt gesture Marina reached for a biscuit from a plate under his very nose. She smeared the biscuit generously with butter and jam and began chewing it, opening her mouth wide in order not to soil her raspberry-coloured lips. Large, closely set teeth glistened ominously in her mouth. She was as red as if she had just come from a hot bath instead of the street, and was unusually — almost grotesquely — large. Clim felt himself overwhelmed by this mass of flesh tightly enveloped in yellow jersey, which made him think of the *Kreutzer Sonata* of Tolstoi. In five minutes Clim learned that Marina had studied for a whole year to be an *accoucheuse,* but that now she was studying singing; that her father, a botanist, had been assigned to the Canary Islands, and had died there, and that a very funny operetta, *The Mysteries of the Canary Islands,* had been written, but had, unfortunately, not been produced for a long time.

"It has a diverting general in it: Patakes, Bombardos. . . ."

She broke off suddenly and turned to Dmitri:

"Kutuzov is coming today, and with him, this. . . ."

She gazed ceilingward. Her amber-coloured eyes were large and prominent; their expression, disagreeably direct.

"You'll see an acquaintance of yours," Dmitri warned Clim, winking.

"Who?"

"I won't tell you."

The old crone's little monkey-paws flitted over the table, skillfully moving the dishes about and pouring out the tea. Her lisping talk rustled on incessantly, but no one listened to her. Dressed in a mouse-coloured garment, she reminded one all the more of a monkey. A slight smile glided rapidly over the wrinkles of her dark little face. Clim thought her smiles crafty, and the old woman unnatural. Her tiny voice was drowned by Dmitri's rude and monotonous one.

"Racial qualities are determined by the blood of the women; that's a proved fact. Take, for example, the autochthons of Chili or Bolivia. . . ."

The Premirova girl suddenly became angry:

"What does it mean — the autochthons? Why do you talk in words one can't understand?"

Sitting shoulder to shoulder with the huge Marina, Dmitri seemed a misfit and ridiculously small; but he was evidently in the seventh heaven. Marina, with a disagreeable expression in her eyes, studied Clim constantly.

"She's spoiled and capricious," Clim decided.

"My aunt is right," Marina declared, in a voice loud and uncultivated as a country girl's, "the city is rotten, and the people in it are dried up. And they're stingy. Lemon for the tea is cut up into twenty pieces!"

Choosing a convenient moment, Clim complained of his

fatigue and left them. His brother, escorting him, persistently questioned him:

"Charming people, eh?"

"Yes."

"Well—rest up!"

Angrily removing his jacket and shoes, Clim tumbled onto his cot and fell asleep, after resolving that he would not remain here; he would live here a week or two out of courtesy, and then move to another place.

3

Some three hours later his brother woke him up, compelled him to wash up, and led him off again to the Premirovas. Clim went unwillingly but was careful to conceal his irritation. The dining-room was crowded. Someone was playing the piano. Marina was shouting, stamping her foot:

"'The poor steed has fallen in the field. . . .'"

Clim's attention was caught by a young man, evidently a university student, wearing a long frock coat that looked like a peasant's great-coat. This youth, grey-eyed, with the square-cut beard of a *mouzhik,* was standing in the middle of the room opposite a dapper pale-faced man dressed in a rather foppish black suit. Holding on to the back of a chair and rocking it, this man was talking with an exaggerated politeness behind which Clim immediately sensed irony.

"I can't picture to myself a free man who doesn't wish to have power over his fellow-men."

"Yes, but what the devil is the use of power when personal property is destroyed?" the bearded student cried out. He glanced casually at Clim and thrust out a broad hand impatiently as he introduced himself:

"Kutuzov."

The fellow in black, smiling, said:

"Don't you recognize me, Samghin?"

Dmitri burst out laughing as he proclaimed:

"Why, this is Turoboev! Aren't you surprised?"

Clim did not have time to be surprised. Marina seized his hand and began whirling him about the room, jostling him carelessly as if he were a little boy.

"This is another Samghin, a dreadfully serious fellow," she announced to a tall woman with a face like a cat's. To Clim she explained:

"They call her Elizaveta Lvovna; and there is her husband."

A little man, very round-shouldered, sat near the piano sorting out music sheets. His curly black hair had a blueish sheen and looked like a skull-cap; his face was grey, but his cheeks wore a hectic flush.

"Spivak," he introduced himself in a muffled voice. "Do you sing?"

Clim's negative answer seemed to amaze him. He took his *pince-nez* from his nose, and, coughing and blinking, looked at Clim with an expression that seemed to inquire:

"Well, why are you here?"

Marina drew Clim away:

"Let's go—he's not interested in anything but music."

On the divan, half-reclining, was a slender girl in a dark dress of the "reform" fashion, which resembled a nun's cassock. Dmitri was bending over her as he talked:

"Ercilla y Zuñiga, a friend of Cervantes, the author of the poem, *The Araucanian Woman*. . . ."

"That's enough of the Spaniards," Marina broke in. "Samghin, this is Seraphima Nekhaeva. That's all!"

She left Clim and ran toward the grand piano. Seraphima Nekhaeva, nodding her head, picked up her thin little legs and

covered them with the skirt of her dress. Clim took this as an invitation to sit down beside her.

He was furious. He was irritated by Marina's noisy animation, and for some reason the meeting with Turoboev had been disagreeable to him. It was hard to believe that this man, with his anaemic face and eyes which somehow seemed to be pleading, had been the boy who stood before Varavka long ago, declaring his love for Lidia in ringing tones. The bearded student, too, was unpleasant.

He and Elizaveta Spivak began to sing a duet unfamiliar to Clim. The little musician accompanied them excellently. Music always pacified Samghin; more precisely, it made a void within him, expelling all thoughts and sensations; as he listened he felt only a gentle nostalgia. The lady sang well, in a soprano that, though not great in volume, was very finished. As she sang, her face lost its resemblance to that of a cat, and became ennobled by sadness; her tall figure grew more slender and graceful. Kutuzov sang in a beautiful baritone, easily and skillfully. Poignantly they sang the finale:

O Night! With all haste to thy breast,
'Neath the folds of thy transparent pall,
Press the soul, to wan sorrow a thrall;
Thy phial of oblivion blest
Shall soothe it, thy poor babe, to rest!

It seemed to Clim that the sorrow of which they sang had now been familiar to him for a long time, but that only now had he come to feel himself filled with it to suffocation, almost to the verge of tears.

When the song was ended, the lady walked up to the table and took an apple out of a bowl. She stroked it thoughtfully with her small hand and put it back in the bowl again.

"Did you notice that?" the girl sitting next to him whispered to Clim.

"What?" he asked, as he glanced at her head, smooth as that of a jackdaw, and at her little, bird-like face that was like a child's.

"Did you notice how she handled that apple?"

"Yes, I saw it."

"What grace—isn't that true?"

Clim nodded his head in affirmation, thinking: "She is probably in a girl's finishing school." But the strange, seemingly imploring glance of her narrow greenish-grey eyes lingered in his memory.

Dmitri began to stir heavily, seizing his crutch as though it were a weapon, and said in a teasing tone:

"But still this Verlaine of yours is worse than Phophanov."

Near the piano Kutuzov stood talking:

"It was Gallen who knew that the seat of the soul is in the cerebral marrow . . ."

"Is it with the cerebral marrow that you sing so soulfully?" asked Turoboev.

"The same as everywhere else," reflected Clim. "There isn't a thing that they will not argue about."

Marina, seizing Kutuzov by his sleeve, dragged him up to the piano. They began to sing "Tempt Me Not." It seemed to Clim that the bearded fellow was singing with too much emotion; it was incongruous—even a bit ridiculous—with his squat figure and flat *mouzhik* face. Marina's strong rich voice was deafening. She was a poor mistress of it; its upper notes sounded harsh and noisy. Clim was gratified to hear Kutuzov, when they had finished the duet, say to her without ceremony:

"No, girl, this wasn't written for you."

Marina and Dmitri with his crutch took up more space than

everybody else in the room. Dmitri moved behind the girl like a small boat in the wake of a great steamer. There was something disquieting in Marina's restless movements. She displayed an excess of animal energy which abashed Clim, arousing in him immodest thoughts not at all flattering to the girl. Even from afar she made him expect her to jostle him with her tight, high bosom, or brush him with her hip. It seemed that her body felt confined not only in her clothing, but even in the room. Watching her resentfully, Clim thought that probably she smelled of sweat, of the kitchen, and the bath. There she was, pressing Kutuzov with her bosom, squawling at him in an offended voice:

"Well, yes. I wear jersey because I can't bear the preachments of Liev Tolstoi."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Kutuzov, and shut his eyes so tightly that his entire face became wrinkled like an old man's.

The pianist's wife was roaming aimlessly through the room. Her swaying walk, the darting glances of her blueish eyes, her manner of touching things lightly reminded Clim of a cat who for the first time accidentally finds itself in unfamiliar quarters. The smile on the tightly stretched lips of her handsome mouth seemed forced, her silence suspicious. "She's crafty," Clim reflected.

Nekhaeva was not attractive. She was sitting awkwardly doubled up, and an overpowering odour of strong perfumes emanated from her. It was easy to believe that the shadows of her eye-sockets were as artificial as the blush of her cheeks and the brightness of her lips. Her hair, drawn down over her ears, made her face narrow and sharp. But Samghin found her less disagreeable than she had seemed at first glance. Her eyes contemplated people sadly, as if she felt older and wiser than anybody else in the room.

Suddenly Clim recalled how outrageously Lidia had bidden him farewell when she was going away to Moscow.

"I believe that you'll return with the shield, and not on the shield," she had said, her lips drawn back in a sneering smile.

His brother came up and seated himself beside Nekhaeva. A moment later Clim heard her reeling off names as if she were reading from a church calendar:

"Mallarmé, Rollinat, René, Ghil, Péladan. . . ."

"Max Nordau has served them up very well," Dmitri said in a teasing voice.

Kutuzov sh-sh'd and shook his finger threateningly — Spivak had started to play Mozart. Turoboev walked up cautiously, smiled to Clim, and perched on an arm of the divan. Close by he seemed older than he really was; the strange white skin of his face seemed powdered lightly; there were blueish shadows under his eyes; the corners of his mouth drooped wearily. When Spivak had finished playing, Turoboev said:

"You have changed very much, Samghin. I remember you as a little pedant who was fond of teaching everybody."

Clim clenched his teeth, trying to think of some retort to this fellow, under whose intense glance he felt ill at ease, Dmitri, tactlessly and too loudly, began discussing the conservatism of the provinces. Turoboev glanced at him; his eyes puckered up, and he said indifferently:

"As for me, I like their steadfastness of tastes and opinions."

"The village is even more steadfast," Clim remarked.

"I don't believe that's a bad thing," said Turoboev, lighting a cigarette. "But here, now, all the phenomena and the people themselves seem more fleeting than anywhere else — I would even say more mortal."

"That's very true!" Nekhaeva agreed.

Turoboev smiled. His two lips did not match; the lower one was considerably thicker than the upper; his dark eyes were well set, but their glance was unpleasantly shifty. Samghin decided that they were the eyes of a sick man who was trying to conceal his pain, and that Turoboev had been prematurely exhausted. His brother argued with Nekhaeva about symbolism. She tried to convince him, somewhat irritatedly:

"You're confusing things. Symbolism should be approached from Plato's point of view."

"Do you remember Lidia Varavka?" Clim asked. Turoboev did not reply immediately. He studied his cigarette smoke for awhile, then spoke:

"Of course. A very lively little gypsy, wasn't she? Well—how's she getting along? She wanted to be an actress? That's a truly feminine profession," he finished with a smile, looking over at Elizaveta Spivak, who, bending over her husband's shoulder to reach the keyboard, was asking Marina:

"Do you hear? *Mi bemol. . . .*"

"And is that all?" Clim reflected. When one thought of Lidia one wanted to feel malicious; yet the resulting thoughts were sad.

They began to sing again, and once more Samghin could scarcely believe that the bearded man with the coarse red face could sing so skillfully and beautifully. Marina sang with vehemence; she opened her mouth wide and contracted her golden eyebrows; her large, full breasts strained voluptuously.

4

About midnight Clim managed to slip away unnoticed to his own room. He immediately undressed and lay down, deafened and fatigued. But he had forgotten to lock his door, and a few

minutes later Dmitri stumped into the room, perched on the bed, and began talking, smiling happily:

"They have that kind of party every Saturday. Look at Kutuzov — a remarkably clever fellow! Turoboev is also an original chap, but in another way. From the School of Jurisprudence he went over to the University, but he doesn't attend lectures, or wear a uniform."

"Does he drink?"

"He drinks, too. Most of the people living here are in an unsettled state. It's a restlessness of the soul!" continued Dmitri, still happily. "But I am getting to be like Dronov: I want to know everything, and don't succeed in anything. I am both a natural history student and a philologist."

Clim wanted to ask about Elizaveta Spivak, but spoke of Nekhaeva instead.

"Nekhaeva? She's rather ridiculous, Nevertheless she's interesting, too, like the others. She's off her head on the subject of the French decadents. But the Spivak, now — There, brother, is a figure for you! It's hard to make her out. Turoboev courts her, and, it seems, not without success. But I don't know. . . ."

"I want to sleep," said Clim irritably; and when his brother had gone away, he reminded himself, "I'll start looking for other quarters tomorrow."

But he could not manage it. The first thing in the morning he fell into Marina's strong hands.

"Well, let's go and look the town over!" Her words were a command, rather than an invitation. Clim thought it discourteous to refuse, and for three hours walked about with her in the fog over slippery sidewalks covered with a particularly repulsive slime that was not at all like the mud of the province. Marina set the tempo of their pace. Her walk, swift and firm, like a

soldier's, was as irrepressible as her words, but Clim found her simple-heartedness pleasant.

"Peterburg is a city of many faces. You see, today it has its mysterious and frightening face. On white nights it is enchantingly ethereal. This is a living city, a city of deep feelings.

Clim said:

"Yesterday I thought that you didn't like it."

"Yesterday I had a quarrel with it; to quarrel doesn't mean not to love."

Samghin thought her answer rather clever.

Through the fog, Clim saw the leaden gleam of the water, the iron gratings of the wharves, and the heavy barges deep in the black waters, like swine lying in mud. The barges seemed absurdly out of place alongside the magnificent buildings. The dull panes of countless windows created a strange impression, as though the houses were chock-full of dingy ice. The wet, pitifully bare trees were unbelievably ugly. The sparrows hopped about disconsolately, almost mute. An occasional church belfry rose skyward voicelessly. Even the few belfries there were seemed superfluous in this city. Above the Neva black smoke from the steamers mingled itself lazily with the fog through which factory chimneys thrust their stony fingers. The suppressed noise of the strange city saddened Clim. The grey people seemed small and debased amidst the mass of enormous houses. The whole effect was to lower the value of individual existence. Clim walked on mechanically in a state of self-forgetfulness, thinking of nothing. Marina spoke in her rich alto voice:

"The mad Paul wanted to build a monument that would be better than that of Falconet, but it wasn't a success. Just rubbish."

The girl walked so fast that one would have thought she was trying to wear herself out. Clim felt a desire to snuggle into some dry cosy nook, where he could comfortably contemplate the scene

spread out before him, a scene glistening with lead and gilt, with copper and bronze.

"Why are you silent?" Marina asked severely. When Samghin replied that the city amazed him, she exclaimed triumphantly: "Aha!"

For several days she took him through the museums, and Clim saw that this gave her the pleasure a housewife shows as she displays the furnishings of her house.

One evening, entering his brother's room, Samghin found Kutuzov and Turoboev there. They were sitting at a table facing one another, like checker-players. Turoboev, lighting a cigarette, was saying:

"And what if it should suddenly prove that accident is merely a pseudonym for the devil?"

"I don't believe in fiends," said Kutuzov seriously, shaking Clim's hand.

Turoboev lit another cigarette from the burning stump of his last, and put the old one down in a pile with six others which had already been extinguished. Turoboev was not sober. His thin hair was dishevelled; his temples were sweating; his pale face had become more scarlet; his eyes, watching the smoking stump of his cigarette, had a piercing glow. Kutuzov gazed at him disapprovingly. Dmitri, propped up on his cot, began pedagogically:

"The idea of the evil influence of science on morals is a bit worn out. It was last expounded quite ably by Rousseau in the year 1750, in his reply to the Academy of Dijon. Your Tolstoi, most probably, had read it in Jean Jacques' *Discours*. And, besides, what sort of a Tolstoian are you, Turoboev? You're nothing but a capricious chap."

Turoboev smiled without answering and Kutuzov asked Clim: "How do you regard Tolstoianism?"

"It's an attempt to return to a fool's estate," Samghin answered bravely, noting in Turoboev's face and eyes something that had been in Makarov's, before his attempted suicide.

Kutuzov burst out laughing and rubbed his hands. Turoboev in a colourless voice answered stubbornly:

"To return to the estate of fools — that's not badly said. I think it's inevitable for us, whether we set out from Leo Tolstoi or from Nikolai Mikhailovski." [18]

"And what if we set out from Marx?" Kutuzov asked gaily.

"I don't believe in a salvation of Russia through a factory boiler."

Clim glanced at Kutuzov in wonder. Could it be possible that this *mouzhik,* who had dressed himself up as a student, was a Marxist? Kutuzov's beautiful voice did not harmonize with the pedantic tone he used in discussing tiresome words and figures. Dmitri at this point prevented Clim from listening.

"I have an extra ticket for the opera. Do you want to use it? I took it for myself, but can't go. Marina and Kutuzov are going."

Then he related indignantly that the censors had definitely forbidden production of the opera *The Merchant Kalashnikov.*

Turoboev got up, looked out of the window, pressing his forehead against the glass, and suddenly departed without saying goodbye to them.

"Clever lad," said Kutuzov, almost regretfully, and then added with a sigh:

"He's venomous."

One by one he pushed the pile of burned-out cigarette stumps from the table onto the floor, and began to question Clim in detail about how people lived in his town; then declared, as he scratched his chin through his beard and wrinkled his forehead:

" Exactly the same way as in our place, in Vologda."

Samghin observed that the more restrained he was in his answers, the more kindly and attentively Kutuzov regarded him. He decided to show himself off a little to this bearded Marxist, and said modestly:

" As a matter of fact, we hardly have the right to make such definite conclusions about the life of the people. Out of tens of thousands, we know, at the best, only how a hundred live, yet we speak as if we had studied the lives of all of them."

His brother agreed:

" That's very true."

" Really? " queried Kutuzov.

And he started again to discuss the process of class cleavage and the decisive rôle of the economic factor. He no longer spoke as boorishly as he had to Turoboev, but showed an ingratiating tact which impressed Clim. Samghin listened to his speech attentively, and rather cleverly put in cautious remarks which confirmed Kutuzov's conclusions. Clim admired himself and felt increasingly friendly toward the Marxist.

5

He went off to his room with the assured feeling that he had laid the cornerstone of that pedestal upon which he, Samghin, would in time rise monumentally. In his room there was a heavy odour of oil; that morning the glazier had put up the window frames for the winter. Clim sniffed, opened the ventilator, and, in a low voice said condescendingly:

" One could live even here, perhaps."

Within two weeks he was definitely convinced that it was interesting to live at the Premirovas'. He had been appraised at his true worth here, it seemed, and he was even a little abashed at

the small effort it had cost him. Out of the bright ideas he had appropriated from Varavka's maxims and from Tomilin's reflections he wove well-rounded phrases, tossing them off with the slight smile of a man who does not place too much faith in words. He perceived already that the rather coarse Marina regarded him with respect. Elizaveta Spivak studied him with a flattering curiosity, and Nekhaeva conversed with him more freely than with any of the others. It was evident that even Dmitri, who always kept his nose buried in thick books, was proud of his clever brother. Clim was ready, too, to be proud of Dmitri's colossal bookishness, and would have been proud of it if he had not realized that his brother was eclipsing him, serving for everybody as a dictionary of the most diverse fields of knowledge. He was teaching the old woman Premirova to prepare eggs *à la Bjernborg;* he explained to Spivak the distinction between the authentic folk song and the mawkish imitations of it by Tziganov, Veltman, and others. Even Kutuzov asked him:

"Samghin, by whom was Count Jacob Tolstoi exposed for spying?"

And Dmitri told, in detail, about Ivan Golovin's book, written in the year of 1846, which was unknown to all of them. He liked to discuss things at length, in a professorial voice, but as if he were telling the story to himself.

The most authoritative person at the Premirovas' was Kutuzov, not only because he talked fluently and keenly about politics, but also because he sang so well. He had an inexhaustible supply of rather coarse good humor, and never became irritated in his endless arguments with Turoboev. Clim often saw this clumsily-cut but strongly-stitched fellow watching everybody with a strangely pensive and seemingly pitying look in his light-grey eyes. He was amazed by Kutuzov's indifferent, and sometimes even harsh,

manner towards Marina; he acted as though he considered the girl inferior to himself. One evening at tea she said angrily:

"Kutuzov, when you sing, you seem to be able to feel, yet when. . . ."

Kutuzov did not let her finish her sentence.

"When I sing I can be sincere, but when I speak with young ladies, I'm afraid that I'm too simple, and, because of fear, take uncertain notes. Is that what you wanted to say?"

Marina turned away from him in silence.

Kutuzov spoke rarely and little with Elizaveta Spivak, but he treated her in a friendly way, addressing her with the familiar form of "thou." Occasionally he fondly called her "Aunt Liza," though she was his senior by only two or three years. He took no notice of Nekhaeva, but always listened attentively from a distance to her disputes with Dmitri, who tirelessly teased this odd girl.

Clim accepted Kutuzov's rudeness as the simple-heartedness of a man of little culture; and seeing in it nothing affected or intentional, excused it. It was pleasant to watch the changing expression on the student's bearded face when he listened to music; pleasant, too, was his commiserating smile, his sad gaze, fixed on one point, seeming to see through people, through the wall even. Dmitri had told him that Kutuzov was the son of a ruined village miller. For two years Kutuzov had been a schoolmaster. During that time he had prepared himself for the University of Kazan, from which, a year later, he had been expelled for participating in student agitations; but after still another year, with the help of Elizaveta Spivak's father, a political leader of the province, he had succeeded in re-entering the Univerity.

The general attitude toward Turoboev was difficult to determine. Sometimes he would be looked after like a sick man; at others, treated with a sort of angry apprehension. Clim could

not understand why Turoboev came to the Premirovas'. Marina treated him with unconcealed dislike. Nekhaeva very curtly and reluctantly agreed to what he said. Elizaveta rarely conversed with him, and when she did she spoke in a low voice. This was all very interesting, and one wanted to understand it. What drew those people together who were so dissimilar? What need did the coarse and too fleshy Marina have of the almost fleshless Nekhaeva; and why did Marina so solicitously and amusingly watch her?

"You just eat — eat more!" she urged her. "Even though you don't want to, you must eat. You are gloomy because you don't eat enough. You, Samghin senior — How do they say that in Latin? D'you hear that? A sound mind in a sound body."

Marina's solicitude made Nekhaeva smile in confusion; it touched her, as Clim saw by the sudden glitter in the eyes of the pathetically thin girl. With her transparent hand Nekhaeva stroked the rosy cheek of her friend, and upon the pallid skin of the back of her hand the little blood-swollen veins would disappear.

Clim considered Nekhaeva and Turoboev the most casual and evasive people in the house. Probably in any house, among any sort of people, they would have given the impression of lost spirits. He felt that his antipathy to Turoboev was increasing. There was something suspicious and very cold about the man; his darting glance was a spy's glance, trying to discover what was hidden. Sometimes his eyes had a look of biting malice. Clim frequently saw Turoboev looking thus at him — a look irritating and brazen. Turoboev's words strengthened Clim's suspicions. Undoubtedly this man had been embittered by something. Though he tried to conceal his malice under a tone of mocking nonchalance, it was obvious that he talked with the sole purpose of irritating his fellow-speaker. At times Turoboev was completely

unbearable to Samghin. This occurred most frequently in his conversations with Kutuzov and Dmitri. Clim could not understand how Kutuzov could laugh good-naturedly as he listened to the skeptical declarations of this dandy:

"You prophesy, Samghin. According to my point of view, the prophets speak of the future for the sole purpose of censuring the present."

Kutuzov laughed, and Dmitri reminded Turoboev of cases in which social previsions had come true.

When Turoboev talked to Marina, it was invariably to make sport of her.

"That's not true!" she cried out at one of these times, growing angry with him about something. He answered seriously:

"That's possible. But I am not a prompter; only prompters are bound to speak the truth."

"Why prompters?" asked Marina, opening wide her eyes, which were large enough without that.

"But how else? If a prompter were to lie he'd spoil your playing."

"What bosh!" said the girl with vexation, leaving him.

Yes, all this was very interesting, and Clim felt growing within him a longing to understand men and women.

6

The University did not in any way astonish or attract Samghin. The introductory lecture of the history professor reminded him of his first day in the *gymnasium*. Great gatherings of people depressed him; in a crowd he lost his ability to think clearly for himself; among the students, uniformly dressed and all looking exactly alike, he felt that he had lost his own individuality.

Below him, swinging an arm monotonously, the upper part of

the body of a skinny professor was visible above the cathedra; he nodded his bald head and touched his beard mechanically; the gold and glass of his spectacles glittered. In a loud voice he was enthusiastically uttering impressive words:

"One's native land. . . . The people. . . . Culture — glory," Clim heard. "The conquests of science. . . . The army of the workers, creating ever easier conditions of life in its struggle with nature. . . . The triumph of humanism."

Clim's neighbour, a rather thin student with a large nose on a face that had been pitted with smallpox, muttered, stammering:

"N-not a fat lot."

Then for a long time his pale and bulging eyes attentively studied the face of the clock on the wall. When the professor left, after tossing his head like a triumphant bull, the stammerer, lifting up his long arms three times, clapped his hands in mild applause and repeated:

"N-no, not a fat lot. And yet 'twas said of him that he's a r-radical. Colleague, are you from Novgorod? No? Well, it doesn't matter. Let's be friends! My name's Popov, Nikolai."

And when he had shaken Samghin's hand he hurried off.

The sciences did not interest Clim very much. He wanted to know people, and soon discovered that novels gave him greater insight into people than scientific books and lectures. He even disclosed to Marina his conviction that through art had come a greater knowledge of man than through science.

"Of course," Marina agreed, "people have begun to realize this. There, just listen to Nekhaeva."

Late in the evening Dmitri came in, wet and tired. Rubbing his throat, he asked in a voice that had become hoarse:

"Well, how goes it? What is your impression?"

But when Clim confessed that he had not felt any holy fear in the temple of science, his brother, clearing his throat, said:

"At my first lecture, I felt greatly agitated."

Then, apparently thinking of something other than what he was saying, he added abstractedly:

"But now I know that Kutuzov is right: the agitation of the students is, truly, a useless waste of force."

Clim smiled, but did not reply. He had already remarked that the students here, his brother's and Kutuzov's acquaintances, discussed the professors and the University almost as inimically as the boys in the *gymnasium* had discussed their school and teachers. Searching for the reasons for such an attitude, he found that this tone was set by such dissimilar people as Turoboev and Kutuzov. With his usual indolent irony, Turoboev had declared:

"Most of the students of the University are Germans, Poles, and Jews. Of the Russians there are only the children of priests. None of the other Russians study; they become too infatuated with the poesy of irresponsible actions. And then they suffer from sudden attacks of Spanish pride. Only yesterday one of these lads was being pulled by the hair by his daddy, yet today this same lad considers an indifferent answer or a sidelong glance from a professor a pretext for a duel. Of course, such a chip-on-the-shoulder conduct could be taken for the quick growth of personality, but I'm inclined to think otherwise."

"Yes," said Kutuzov, nodding his large head. "One observes a rather calf-like throwing up of tails toward heaven. But it must also be said that youth is being humbugged all too unskillfully in an endeavor to squeeze out of it the juices of vain thought. . . ."

"Vainglory," Turoboev corrected him.

Clim zealously tried to understand: What was the common tie between these two? Once when they were sitting on the divan waiting for the usual concert at the Premirovas', Kutuzov reproached Turoboev:

"You'll scatter yourself in the dust of ironies, and that's a cheap affair!"

"An unprofitable affair," Turoboev agreed. "I understand that it is much more profitable to make a place for one's self in life on its leeward side; but, alas, I am not capable of doing so."

Laughing infectiously, Kutuzov shouted:

"But you've already arranged yourself on the leeward side!"

During the same evening Clim asked him:

"What do you admire in Turoboev?"

The bearded fellow answered paternally:

"In certain doses acids are just as necessary to the body as salt is. I prefer a Chadaaev mood to the sweetish heights of wisdom of certain literary bell-ringers." [19]

This was said in Dmitri's presence, who quickly explained:

"Turoboev is interesting as a representative of a class which is dying out."

And Kutuzov, glancing at him with a smile, agreed:

"Right you are, Mitiya!"

Samghin did not consider Kutuzov's smile at all flattering to his brother; he had often seen such condescending and shrewd smiles on Kutuzov's bearded face. They did not cause him to distrust the student, but only strengthened his interest in him. Nekhaeva was growing more and more interesting, but she embarrassed Clim with her frank and eager effort to find a like-minded partisan in him. Enumerating the names of unfamiliar French poets, she talked as if she were sharing mysteries of which he, Clim Samghin, was the only one worthy of having knowledge.

"Have you read *Illusions,* by Jean Lahors?" she would ask him; and the all-wise Dmitri would explain:

"The pseudonym of Dr. Casales."

"He is a Buddhist, this Lahors; but such a caustic, such a bitter fellow."

Dmitri was refreshing his memory, gazing up at the ceiling.

"And then there's Cassote, the author of that silly novel, *The Love of the Devil.*"

"What a pity you know so much that is useless to you," Nekhaeva said to him, and turned again to the younger Samghin, praising Rostand's *Princess' Dream.*

"This is a *chef d'oeuvre* of the new Romanticism. Rostand, in the near future, will be acknowledged a genius."

Clim saw that this long list of names and books that were familiar only to Nekhaeva and Dmitri bored everybody. He also saw that they didn't take seriously Nekhaeva's opinions on literature, and that this offended her. He felt sorry for her. Turoboev, the enemy of prophets, deliberately and cruelly quenched her enthusiasms:

"This must be recognized as a sign of *bourgeois* satiation with cheap rationalism. This is the beginning of the end of a very untalented epoch."

Clim had begun to regard Nekhaeva as a fantastic person. She had leaped somewhere far ahead, or had run off to one side, of actuality, and lived in thoughts that Dmitri described as "graveyardish." There was something so tense about her that she verged on despair. At times she seemed ready to leap out of the window. Clim was especially struck by her lack of feminine personality, of any physical attraction. She did not arouse in him the emotions a man usually feels toward a woman.

She drank and ate as though she forced herself to do so, as if it almost nauseated her; and it was obvious that she was not pretending, that it had nothing to do with a woman's coquetry. Her thin fingers held a knife and fork clumsily. She squeamishly pinched off bits of bread, and her bird-like eyes regarded the cottony crumbs questioningly, as though she were thinking: Is this substance bitter, perhaps, or poisonous?

Ever more frequently Clim considered Nekhaeva more intelligent than anyone else in this gathering. But this, instead of drawing him nearer the girl, drove him further away from her. He was afraid that Nekhaeva would understand in him what he did not want her to understand, and start talking to him condescendingly, negligently, or vexedly, as she did to Dmitri.

7

Lying in bed, Samghin would smile, thinking of how quickly and easily he had won the good opinion of everyone. He never doubted that he had fully succeeded in this. But though he felt the trust of his fellow-men, he did not lose the cautiousness of one who knows his game is difficult and dangerous. There were moments when his rôle, fatiguing him, brought a dim consciousness of dependence on a power inimical to him; moments when he felt himself the servant of an unknown master. There came to his mind one of Tomilin's countless observations:

" On most men, a large number of impressions act destructively, cluttering up their moral sense. But this very same richness of impressions often creates people who are exceptionally interesting. Look at the biographies of famous criminals, adventurers, and poets. Usually those people who are overburdened with experiences are amoral."

In the red-headed teacher's words Clim felt something both frightening and alluring. It seemed to him that he was already overburdened with experience, but at times he felt that all the impressions, all the thoughts which he had hoarded up, were unnecessary to him. There was nothing about them that had become part of him, that he could have called his own personal deduction, his creed. All this had a life within him almost against his will; and not deep within him, somewhere only skin deep, while

below was a void waiting to be filled with other matter. This feeling of discord and enmity between him, the containing one, and that which he contained within himself, Clim experienced with ever greater and more alarming frequency. He envied Kutuzov, who had learned how to believe, and calmly preached his beliefs. But he envied Turoboev, too. The latter, evidently not believing in anything, was possessed of the daring to make a mock of the beliefs of others. When Turoboev conversed with Kutuzov and Dmitri, Clim would recall the old stone mason who had so cunningly and maliciously egged on the stupid strong fellow to shatter bricks that otherwise could have been used again.

Samghin was convinced that all people were vainglorious, that everyone wanted to launch off from the others only in order to become more noticeable; thus began all disagreements and disputes. But he was beginning to suspect that besides this there was in people something else which he could not comprehend. And there arose a persistent desire to analyse people, to learn what spring it was that impelled a human being to speak and act exactly as he or she did, and not otherwise.

For his first experiment Clim chose Seraphima Nekhaeva. She seemed the most convenient because she did not have the usual fascination of woman and one could study her, reveal her, expose her in something, without the fear of falling into the stupid situation of Greloux, the hero of Bourget's *The Disciple,* a novel which had created quite a stir. Marina repulsed him by her animal energy, and there was nothing enigmatic about her. When Clim chanced to be alone with her in a room he felt himself in danger under the gaze of her prominent eyes; her gaze was challenging and shameless.

His curiosity had been keenly aroused one evening when Nekhaeva had shouted, almost hysterically, in Dmitri's face:

"Do understand, now — I can't bear normal people! I can't bear those who are merry. The merry ones are stupid and vulgar to the verge of horror."

Another time she had said angrily:

"Nietzsche was a nincompoop, but he strained himself in an effort to play tragic rôles, and went mad over that."

When she was angry the red spots vanished from her cheeks, her face became deathly pale, and green lights seemed to glitter in her eyes.

8

One bright winter day, as Samghin was walking slowly along the wharves of the Neva, fixing in his memory the more important parts of a lecture, he spied Nekhaeva from afar. The girl had come out of the portals of the Academy of Arts, crossed the road, and paused near a sphinx to gaze at the river that was covered with blindingly white snow. In places the snow had been blown away by the wind, and the blueish bald spots of ice were exposed. Nekhaeva greeted Clim with a friendly smile and began talking in her weak voice:

"I've just come from the exposition. The pictures are platitudes in pigments — painfully uninspired. Are you headed for the city? So'm I."

She wore a short fur coat that was the grey of an evening sky; on her head perched a queer little cap of blue squirrel. Her hands were thrust into a muff of the same fur. She was decidedly distinctive. Her walk was irregular; it was difficult to keep in step with her. The blue sparkling air tickled her nostrils, so she buried her nose in the muff.

"If only all life could halt like this frozen river, in order to give men time to think calmly and deeply about themselves," she said indistinctly, talking into her muff.

"Under the ice the river is flowing on just the same," Clim wanted to say, but discarding the thought as too trite, he glanced at her bird-like face and said:

"Leontiev, a noted conservative, was of the opinion that Russia should be made to freeze a bit."

"Why Russia alone? The whole universe ought to be frozen into silence for a time, made to rest for a space."

Her eyes squinted and blinked from the prickling glitter of the snowy sparkles, and she tried constantly to suppress a dry cough. She spoke with the eagerness of one who had been silent for a long time, as if she had just been released from solitary confinement in a prison. Clim answered in the tone of a man certain that he would hear nothing original; but he listened attentively. Passing from one theme to another, she asked him:

"How do you like Turoboev?"

And she herself answered:

"I don't understand him. He's some sort of Nihilist, born too late, indifferent to everything, even to himself. How odd it is: that cold, narrow Spivak woman is infatuated with him."

"Really?"

"Oh, yes!"

After a moment's silence she asked Clim what he thought about Marina, and went on again without waiting for him to answer:

"She'll be very happy in a certain feminine conception of happiness. She'll love a great deal; then, when she's tired of it, she'll begin loving dogs and tom-cats with the same love she lavishes on me. She's so well-fed, so Russian. But I don't consider myself a Russian; I am of St. Petersburg. Moscow makes me lose my sense of individuality. I don't know much about Russia, really, and don't understand it. It seems to me that it is a land full of people who are unnecessary to everybody, including themselves. But you take Frenchmen or Englishmen — they are necessary to

the entire universe. And even the Germans, though I don't like Germans."

She talked on and on, confusing Samghin with her extraordinary opinions. He did not sense a simplicity of feeling behind her surprising frankness, and became even more guarded in his words. When they were on the Nevski she suggested that they have coffee, and in the restaurant she conducted herself much too freely for a girl, it seemed to Clim.

"My treat," she said, as she ordered coffee, liqueur, and biscuits. As she unbuttoned her short fur coat the aroma of unfamiliar perfumes was wafted to Clim. They sat near the window; outside, a dark current of people flowed by the panes that were covered with hoarfrost. Nibbling at the biscuits, Nekhaeva continued:

"In Russia they don't talk of important matters. They don't read the books that are necessary to real knowledge. They don't do the things they ought to do; and what they do is done, not to help themselves, but merely to show off."

"That's true," Clim said, "there's a great deal of truth in that. And they are forever bombarding one another with questions."

"Kutuzov is almost a finished operatic singer, and yet he's studying political economy. Your brother has an incredible fund of knowledge, but still — will you pardon me? — he's an ignoramus."

"And that, too, is true," Clim agreed, though he felt that it was time to contradict. But Nekhaeva suddenly became weary. Only two bright spots remained on her frost-tinted cheeks; her eyes had dimmed. She began saying dreamily that to live with all of one's soul was possible only in Paris; that she was to pass the winter in Switzerland, but had been forced to come to Peterburg on a dull business matter in connection with a small inheritance. She ate up all the biscuits and drank two ponies of liqueur.

When she had finished her coffee she quickly, with an almost imperceptible gesture, made the sign of the cross over her flat breasts.

"Probably within two or three weeks I shall leave here."

As she drew on a glove she bit her lips and sighed:

"Perhaps forever."

On the street she asked:

"Do you know Maeterlinck? Oh, you must, without fail, read *The Death of Tantagilles,* and *The Blind*. He is a genius! He's still young, but he's amazingly profound. . . ."

She stopped on the sidewalk suddenly, as if she were confronted by a wall, and extended her hand:

"Goodbye. Drop in to see me!"

Having given her address, she got into one of the waiting sleighs. As the chilled horse dashed forward, Clim saw her thrown back so violently that she almost tumbled out. Clim also hired a sleigh, and as he rode along, fell into deep thought about this girl who was unlike all his acquaintances. For a moment it seemed to him that she had something about her in common with Lidia; but he immediately rejected the idea of such resemblance, finding it not at all flattering to himself when he recalled a remark of Varavka's:

"When people do not understand, they imagine things and make mistakes."

Varavka had said this about his daughter.

9

The meeting with Nekhaeva did not make her seem any more attractive to Clim, but the fact that she had held herself at her ease in the restaurant, like a habitué, intrigued him.

On the day when Clim Samghin went to visit her a heavy snow

was falling on the dismal city; it fell quickly, straight down; its flakes were unusually large, and rustled like tatters of paper.

Nekhaeva lived in furnished rooms; hers was the last door at the end of a long corridor; the corridor was feebly lit by a window which was half covered by a wardrobe; the window looked out directly upon a dull-grey smooth wall. Between the window and the wall snow was falling heavily. It looked grey, like ashes.

"What a dirty hole she lives in," Clim thought, taking off his overcoat in the small dim entry. But on entering the room he felt that he had been fetched magically away from under the dreary sky crumbling with snow. Warmly lit by a large orange-shaded lamp, the room was decorated with pieces of oriental materials in the soft colours of a sunset sky. Little yellow French books lay scattered about on the table and sofa like leaves from some strange plant. Nekhaeva, in a yellow robe girdled with a broad greenish belt, greeted him in concern:

"Pardon me—I'm only dressed for the house."

"Fine place you have here," said Clim.

"Do you like it?"

She hastened to light the spirit lamp, and placed over it an oddly shaped copper kettle, saying:

"I can't stand samovars!"

With one foot, slippered in green morocco, she shoved underneath the table the books that had fallen to the floor, and moved the things on the table to one side, toward the window, which was draped with a rich, dark material. She did all this very quickly. Clim sat down on the sofa and glanced about the room. Its corners were softened by drapes. One-third of it was divided off by a Chinese screen; behind this screen one caught a glimpse of the bed. The window at its foot was hung with a thick rug of a dull-red colour; the same sort of rug covered the floor. The warm air of the room was heavy with perfume.

"I do not like vivid colours, loud music, straight lines. All this is too real, and for that reason, false," Clim heard.

The girl's rapid movements caused the sleeves of her robe to wave like wings. There was something about her fluttering hands that made Clim remember Tomilin's blindly groping hands. When she spoke, Nekhaeva's light voice was like Lidia's had been as a young girl of thirteen or fourteen years. It seemed to Clim that Nekhaeva was confused by something; she acted as if she had been caught unawares. She had forgotten to change her dress; the robe slipped off her shoulders, revealing their sharp bones and the skin of her bosom, tinted an unnatural hue by the lamp light.

During their tea Clim heard that all the true and eternal is hidden in the depth of the soul, and everything outside the soul, the whole world, is a tangled chain of failures, mistakes, clumsy actions and pitiful efforts to express the ideal beauty of the universe, confined in the thoughts of only a chosen few.

"Oh, I forgot!" she cried out, suddenly jumping up from the sofa to fetch from a small cabinet a bottle of wine, liqueur, a box of chocolates, and biscuits. She distributed them about the table; then, leaning her bare thin arms against it, she asked:

"Can you bear to think about the futility of life?"

Clim wanted to smile, but restrained himself and answered gravely:

"At times it is very disturbing."

Noticing that anger flared in Nekhaeva's eyes, he added:

"There are times when one wakes in the morning and thinks the awakening in vain."

Nekhaeva nodded her head affirmatively:

"Yes, of course, you're bound to feel exactly that. I gather this from your restraint, from your smile, which is always serious,

from the way you keep silence so well when everybody else is shouting. And what do they shout about? "

She crossed her arms on her bosom, and placing her palms over her bony shoulders, continued indignantly:

" The people, the working class, the socialists, Bebel — I read his *Woman* — My God, what a bore! In Paris and Geneva I met socialists; these people consciously limit themselves. They are not wholly unlike monks; they're just as little free of hypocrisy. All of them more or less resemble Kutuzov, but are without his laughable *mouzhik*-like condescension to men and women, whom he either cannot or will not understand. Kutuzov himself isn't stupid, and he seems sincerely to believe in what he talks about; but all these vague things are only Kutuzovishness: the people, the masses, the leaders — How absurd it is! "

She shuddered; her hands fell limply from her shoulders. Lifting to the lamp's light a tiny liqueur glass that resembled a flower on its long stalk, she admired the venomously green colour of the liqueur, drank it down and began coughing so violently that her body trembled. She put her handkerchief to her mouth.

" This is bad for you," Clim said, tapping the glass with his finger nail. Nekhaeva, coughing, shook her head in denial and, breathing heavily, began telling him between her fits of coughing about Verlaine, who had been ruined by absinthe — " the green fay."

" Love and death," Clim heard her say, " in these twin mysteries is hidden the entire awful meaning of our being. All the rest — including Kutuzovishness — is only an unsuccessful, poltroonish effort to deceive ourselves with trifles."

Clim asked:

" But then, is humanism trifles? "

He put himself on guard, expecting that she would begin dis-

cussing love. It would have been amusing to hear what this girl would say about love. But, having styled humanism "a *bourgeois* dream about a common state of being well fed," a dream "whose impossibility of realization has been proved by Malthus," Nekhaeva broached the subject of death. At first Clim caught something churchly in her voice; she even recited several verses from the chants of the liturgy for the dead, but their sombre verses had a vague sound. Clim, painstakingly wiping the glass of his spectacles with a piece of chamois, reflected that Nekhaeva was talking like an old woman. With his head bent, he avoided looking at the girl, afraid that she might discover that he was bored. It seemed that she already realized it, or that she had become fatigued. Her words came more quietly. Clim raised his head to to put on his spectacles, but instead his hands sank slowly to the edge of the table.

"No, only think," Nekhaeva said in a half-whisper, bending toward him, holding a trembling hand in the air. Her eyes were unnaturally dilated, and her face seemed sharper than it usually was. He leaned back against his chair, listening to her stealthy undertone:

"Some sort of mysterious force hurls man defenceless on this universe without reason or speech. Then, in his youth, tearing his soul away from his flesh, it makes that soul an impotent spectator of the tormenting passions of the body. After that this devilish force infects man with sickly vices and, having broken him on the rack, holds him for a long while in old age's disgrace — but without extinguishing in him even then the thirst for love, yet not depriving him of the memory of the past and its sparks of happiness which for a few moments deceptively glimmer before him — holds him without allowing him to forget the griefs he has lived through, torturing him with envy of the joys of youth. Finally, as though avenging itself on man for his having

had the hardihood to live, this pitiless force puts him to death. Where is the sense of it? Whither vanishes that strange thing we call the soul? "

She was no longer whispering; her voice rang with an angry pathos. Her face had become agonizingly twisted; it recalled to Clim a picture of a witch in Andersen's fairy tales. It seemed to him that in her glance there flamed an emotion evil and vengeful. He let his head sink, expecting at any moment to hear this strange creature shouting in a desperate cry like that of the doctor's wife, the insane Somov woman:

" No, no, no! "

When Clim Samghin read books and verses dealing with the themes of love and death they did not stir him. But now, when thoughts of death and love were wrathfully spoken by a small, almost ugly, girl, Clim suddenly felt these thoughts strike him cruelly, both in his heart and in his head. He had become wholly confused, and his thoughts had started swirling, like smoke. He no longer heard Nekhaeva's agitated speech, but gazed at her wonderingly. Why did this uncomely girl with her flat bosom, who suffered from a dangerous disease — why was she condemned to harbour such thoughts, thoughts that should torment only old people? There was something hideously unjust about it. He felt pity for her as one afflicted by disease both of body and soul. He was experiencing the feeling of pity with great poignancy for the first time. Heretofore he had been but poorly acquainted with emotion.

He lifted his liqueur glass from the table. The glass resembled a blossom whose tints had faded. Squeezing its thin stalk between his fingers, he said, sighing:

" It must be depressing for you to live with such thoughts."

" But then for you, too? You, too? " she said these words strangely, as though she were not asking but imploring. Her face,

which had been hotly flushed, was growing paler; she looked less agonized.

Clim wanted to say a kindly word to her, but at this point he snapped the stem of the glass.

"Did you cut yourself?" the girl exclaimed, jumping up and darting toward him.

"Just a trifle," he answered guiltily, wrapping his finger in a handkerchief. Nekhaeva, stroked his hand with her own, which was unnaturally hot, and said gratefully in a low voice:

"How deeply you feel!"

She began dashing about the room, tore up a handkerchief, and poured some burning liquid over the cut. After tightly binding his finger, she urged him:

"Drink some wine."

Pouring out some liqueur for herself, she sat down at the table again.

For a minute or two they sat silently without looking at one another. Clim found the silence awkward, and wished that Nekhaeva would keep on talking. He asked:

"Do you like Schopenhauer?"

"I've read him," she replied after a moment. "But, d'you see, words which are too naked do not reach my soul. You remember how Tutchev puts it: 'Thought which is uttered is falsehood.' To me, Maeterlinck is more of a philosopher than this rude and angry German. The word that is sung is more profound, more significant, than the one that is spoken. You'll agree that only the greatest of all the arts — music — is capable of touching the depths of the soul."

With a sigh, she lowered the flame of the lamp. This made the room seem more crowded. All its objects, and Nekhaeva herself, seemed to draw nearer to Samghin. He nodded his head in agreement:

"To Maeterlinck the ethics of compassion are not foreign either, and perhaps he borrowed it from Schopenhauer. But what need of compassion have they who are condemned to death?"

Looking intently into the orange-coloured glow above the girl's head, Clim was asking himself:

"Why did she lower the light?"

Nekhaeva bent down, kicking the little yellow books from under the table with her foot, and said:

"We live in an atmosphere of cruelty. This gives us the right to be cruel in all things: in hatred, in love."

Before Samghin realized that he ought to help her, she picked up a book from the floor, opened it, and said severely:

"Listen to this!"

In a low voice, drawling out the vowels, she began reading verses. She read with intensity, making unexpected pauses and keeping time with her arm, which was bared to the elbow. The verses were very musical but of an elusive meaning: They spoke of maidens with golden blindfolds over their eyes; of three blind sisters. Only in two lines:

Have pity on me because
I linger on the boundary of my desire. . . .

Clim caught something that was half-understandable, like a challenge or hint. He glanced interrogatively at the girl, but she was looking into the book. Her right hand fluttered in the air. With her hand that was blueish in the shadow and seemed fleshless, Nekhaeva touched her face, her breasts, and her shoulders, as though she were sketchily making the sign of the cross, or trying to reassure herself that she actually had a body. Clim knew that the wine, the odour of the perfumes, and the poetry were having an intoxicating effect on him. He was gradually submitting to a

drowsiness he had never experienced before, which deprived everything of its colours and evoked a desire to desist from all movement, from listening to anything, from all thought. And so he did not think.

When she finished reading she threw the book on the sofa and with a trembling hand poured out more liqueur for herself. Samghin wiped his forehead. He looked about him like a sleeper just awakened. He felt with amazement that he could have listened for a long time more to the sonorous but scarcely understandable verses in a foreign tongue.

"Verlaine, Verlaine," Nekhaeva sighed twice. "He's like a fallen angel."

And she lay down on the sofa with extraordinary lightness, throwing herself bodily from the chair.

"Are you tired?" Clim asked.

He arose and looked into the girl's face. It was grey, with red spots at the temples.

"Thank you," she said quickly. "A remarkable evening. Please don't get up!"

"Come again soon," she begged him, pressing his hand with her hot bony fingers, "for I shall soon be gone."

With the other hand she gave him a book:

"And do read this through!"

VIII

I

IN the street the snow was still falling, and falling so thickly that it was difficult to breathe. The city had become voiceless and still. It had disappeared under the white snow. The lamps, covered with thick mobcaps, stood within pyramids of light. With the collar of his overcoat turned up and his hands thrust in his pockets, Clim slowly walked over the snow which muffled all sound, as he weighed his impressions of the evening. The white flakes fell on his face and immediately melted, but they refreshed his skin. Clim angrily blew the drops of water from his upper lip and nose, feeling that he was carrying within him a depressing weight, a demoniac dream-vision which could never be forgotten. Before him in the zigzagging snow the face of the little old witch seemed to flutter. When he shut his eyes in order not to see it, it became more clearly defined; its dark glance insistently demanded something. But the snow and his excellently developed instinct of self-protection quickly awakened protesting thoughts in Clim. Where one considered the outer appearance of the girl, her lengthy words, and then the beauty of the poetry she had read, there was something absurdly incongruous about her. One might have thought that her pitiful body harboured the soul of someone else. Nekhaeva drank too much liqueur, Samghin reflected, and ate too many candies that contained rum.

"A sick person — so, naturally, she thinks and talks about death. Thoughts of this nature — about the end of being, and so forth — are not for her, but for healthy people. For Kutuzov, for instance, or for Tomilin."

As he recalled Kutuzov's boring speeches, Clim smiled: "'Kutuzovishness' — that's not at all bad!"

By the time he neared his house, Clim had already managed to convince himself that the experiment with Nekhaeva was finished; that the spring which was at work within her was illness. And there was no sense in listening to her hysterical speeches brought about by a fear of death. "Actually all this is very simple!" he assured himself.

That night he read through *The Blind* by Maeterlinck. The monotonous language of the play, devoid of any action, hypnotized him. It filled him with a vague sadness, but he could not capture the meaning of the piece. Vexedly, he threw the book to the floor and tried to go to sleep, but could not. His thoughts returned to Nekhaeva, but now they were more gentle. He recalled her words about the right of men and women to be cruel in love, and asked himself:

"What did she want to convey by saying that?"

Then he sighed in sympathy.

"It isn't likely she will find a man who will fall in love with her."

His tired eyes saw in the darkness of the room a horde of phantasmal grey shades; among them flitted a small girl with the face and smooth head of a bird.

"She's blinded by fear," he insisted to himself.

The shades wavered like the barely perceptible reflections of autumn clouds upon the dark water of a river. His mood of sadness deepened with the gathering darkness. Imagination, hindering both sleep and thought, filled the darkness with monotonous

sounds: the echo of distant bells, the wailing of a violin with muted strings. The black panes of the window slowly faded to a leaden hue.

2

Clim awoke after midday in the mood of a man who, having the day before lived through something significant, cannot understand whether he has gained or whether he has lost. The customary easy flow of his thoughts about himself was now difficult and heavy. His thoughts were muddled, and this irritated him. His memory was cluttered up with a chaos of strange words, verses, the plaints of *The Blind,* a stealthy whisper and Nekhaeva's wrathful exclamations. Dressing, he angrily lifted the book from the floor. He read a page through, standing up, and then tossing the book on the bed, shrugged his shoulders. The snow was still falling outside the window, but now it was fine and dry.

Clim Samghin decided not to leave his room, but the chambermaid, when she brought in his coffee, said that the men to wax the floor were coming in a minute. He picked up the book and went into his brother's room. Dmitri was not there. Turoboev was standing near the window, wearing a student's frock, drumming his fingers on the window-pane. He was watching a shaggy cloud of smoke crawling lazily toward the sky.

"A fire," he said, after he had shaken Samghin's hand feebly and carelessly, as he always did. In the middle of an even line of roofs, warmly blanketed with snow, one roof was smoking with fluid, grey smoke. Over the thick layer of snow brass-helmeted men were painfully crawling, grey too, like the smoke.

This sight Clim thought was overwhelmingly tedious.

"It doesn't want to burn," Turoboev said, and left the window. Behind his back Clim heard his soft exclamation:

"Ah, Maeterlinck!"

Yielding to a desire to cut to the quick a man who was unpleasant to him, Clim searched his memory for a sharp, bitter word, but failing to find it, he muttered:

"Twaddle."

Turoboev was not offended. He came up beside Clim, and, while he seemed to be listening for some sound, began talking quietly and listlessly:

"No, why should it be twaddle? It's done quite skillfully, like an allegory for the instruction of older children. The blind ones are contemporaneous humanity; the leaders — depending on one's desire — can be understood as reason or faith. However, I haven't read this thing to the end."

Clim left the window feeling vexed with himself. Why was it that he had not been able to grasp the meaning of the piece? Sitting down at the table, Turoboev lit a cigarette, but at once thrust it nervously into the ash tray.

"Is it Nekhaeva who's enlightening you? She tried to develop me, too," he said, thoughtfully turning the leaves of the book. "She's rather fond of the piquant. She evidently thinks her brain is something like a pin cushion — you know, those little cushions stuffed with sand?"

"She's extremely well read," Clim said, merely to say something. Turoboev very quietly added his own words:

"An autumn fly."

Something heavy, like the foot of a chair, was struck three times above the ceiling. Turoboev got up, looked past Clim as if he were not there, and left the room.

"He must have gone to see Madame Spivak; it was doubtless she who knocked," Clim guessed, looking out at the roof where the firemen trampling the snow were almost obscured by the dense grey smoke.

"He himself is an autumn fly — this Turoboev."

Marina entered without knocking, as if it were her own room.

"Want tea?"

"Yes, thank you."

Angrily looking into Clim's face, she asked:

"Where's your brother?"

"I don't know."

She turned toward the door, but, having opened it, again took a step toward Samghin.

"He didn't sleep at home," she said sternly. Clim smiled.

"That occasionally happens with young people."

Marina's face reddened.

"It seems you are indulging in vulgarities. But I wonder if you know that he has taken up with the workers, and that for such things. . . ."

She went out abruptly without finishing what she had to say, and before Samghin, annoyed by her tone, had a chance to tell her indignantly that he was not Dmitri's governor.

"What a fool," he cursed, walking up and down the room. "Just a coarse, common she-fool."

There came to his memory the time when, on entering the dining-room, he had seen Marina standing in her own room opposite Kutuzov, thumping her fist on the palm of her left hand and speaking close to the face of the bearded student:

"I am simply a wo-man! A wo-man!"

At first her words had seemed to Clim exclamations of amazement or offense. She was standing with her back to him and he did not see her face. But her next remarks showed that she was furious, and though her voice was not loud, but low, Clim expected her to start shouting deafeningly or to stamp her feet.

"'D'you understand?" she persisted, accompanying each word with a smacking blow of her fist against her soft palm. "He has a

path of his own before him. He'll be a man of learning — Yes, a professor! "

" Don't roar," Kutuzov had said.

He was half a head taller than Marina, and one could see that his grey eyes were studying the girl's face with curiosity. With one hand he was smoothing his beard; the other, hanging by his side, held a smoking cigarette. Marina's fury was unabated:

" He's simple-hearted and honest, but he has no will of his own. . . ."

" Oh — I'm afraid I've burnt a hole in your skirt! " Kutuzov exclaimed, moving away from her. Marina turned around, caught sight of Clim, and walked out into the dining-room, her face almost purple.

Clim was not interested in his brother's life, but after this scene he began to study Dmitri very attentively. He was soon convinced that his brother, yielding to Kutuzov's influence, was playing in his presence the debasing rôle of slave to Kutuzov's interests and aims. Once Clim said as much to Dmitri, with all the seriousness and fraternal love he could muster; but his brother, with his eyes popping out in amazement, burst into laughter:

" Why — you're crazy! "

Then he slapped Clim's knee fondly and said:

" Thanks, just the same! You've put it rather well, you strange lad."

Clim became silent, Dmitri's surprise, his laughter and his gesture, all seemed foolish. Twice Clim had seen illegal pamphlets on his brother's table. One of them was *What a Worker Should Know and Remember;* another, *Concerning Fines.* Both were soiled and crumpled, the text smeared with finger prints.

" It's obvious that he's fussing with the workers. And if he's arrested it may even affect me. We're brothers, living under the same roof."

Disturbed, he began walking more rapidly up and down the room. Of all the people Clim had met, the miller's son seemed to him the most exceptional because of his finished state. Samghin had not noticed anything superfluous in him, anything "thought-up," anything which could have given him cause to think: "This man isn't what he seems." His rude speech, his clumsy gestures, his condescending but good-natured smiles, his good voice — all these things went together perfectly, and each of them was necessary as each part of a machine is necessary to make it a perfect whole. Clim even remembered a line from the verse of a young but already well-known poet: "There is beauty in the locomotive."

But Kutuzov's sermonizing was constantly becoming cruder and more aggressive. Clim felt that Kutuzov was capable of spiritually subduing to himself, not only Dmitri, but also himself. It was difficult to contradict Kutuzov when he looked you straight in the eyes. His glance was freezing as he said:

"You reason rather naïvely, Samghin. Your head is filled with mush. I can't understand — Just what are you? An idealist? No. A skeptic? You don't act like one. And besides, young man, when would you have had time to acquire skepticism through any real living? Now in Turoboev's case, his skepticism is complete. It is the world-consciousness of a man who knows very well that his class has finished playing its rôle and is rapidly sliding down an inclined plane into un-being."

Kutuzov had a habit of launching into tiresome talks about agrarian politics, or civic banks, or the growth of industries. Clim felt that Kutuzov was all too easily shaking his, Clim's, self-assurance; that this man was coercing him into agreement with deductions against which he, Clim Samghin, could only protest:

"I don't want to."

But he could not find the courage to say even these words.

He halted suddenly in the middle of the room. Crossing his arms on his breast, he concentrated intently on the consoling idea unfolding within him: all that Nekhaeva had said might serve as a good weapon of self-protection for him. It was all very firmly pitted against "Kutuzovishness." Social questions were insignificant compared to the tragedy of individual existence.

"This explains exactly my apathy to the preachments of Kutuzov, Clim decided, resuming his walk up and down the room. "This hasn't been taught me by anybody. I myself, and long ago, too, realized this."

3

He went into the dining-room, drank some tea and sat alone there for a little while, congratulating himself on how easily new thoughts came to him. Then he started out for a stroll, and without being conscious of going there, discovered himself near the entrance of the house where Nekhaeva lived.

"Conversations with her are useful," he reflected, as though apologizing to someone. The girl met him joyously. She ran about flurriedly from corner to corner as before, complaining that she had been unable to get to sleep that night; the police had come and had arrested somebody; a drunken woman had shouted; there had been stamping and running up and down the corridor.

"The gendarmes?" Clim asked glumly.

"No, the police. They arrested a thief."

During tea Clim discussed Maeterlinck, but restrainedly, as one who knows his own opinion but does not want to inflict it on his companions. He permitted himself the observation that the allegory of *The Blind* was all too obvious, and that Maeterlinck's views about the intellect were not unlike those of Liev Tolstoi. It pleased him when Nekhaeva agreed with him.

"Yes," she said. "But Tolstoi is coarser. For in him there is a great deal derived from the intellect — from a muddled spring. And it seems to me that the feeling of an inner freedom is organically inimical to him. Tolstoi's anarchism is a legend. Anarchism is ascribed as an addition to the number of his good qualities by the generosity of his worshippers."

Her physical poverty particularly offended Clim that evening. A heavy woolen dress of a dull shade seemed to weigh down her movements and add to her age. Her hair, evidently just washed, was gathered into a tight knot which made her head look large and ugly. Clim felt little pricks of pity for this girl, who had hidden herself in the dark nook of these dingy furnished rooms, where she had in spite of everything managed to arrange a cosy nest for herself.

She discussed the same subjects as on his previous visit — life's mystery and the mystery of death — but in different words; and more deliberately, as though she expected him to contradict her. Her quiet words settled lightly in Clim's mind, like motes of dust on a lacquered surface.

"And yet she can't make herself discuss love," he reflected. "She probably would like to, but doesn't dare."

He himself felt no desire to shift the conversation to this theme. The shade of the lamp, adjusted low, made the light in the room an orange mist. The dark ceiling, criss-crossed with cracks; the walls, covered over with pieces of cloth; the dark rug on the floor — all this gave Clim a strange sensation, as if he were sitting in a closed bag. It was very warm and unnaturally quiet. Scarcely a dull rumble came up to them; but at times the entire room would shudder and seem to sink down as a heavily laden dray passed by in the street.

Listening inattentively to Nekhaeva's soft voice, Clim reflected:

"Life isn't given me for the purpose of deciding who is right, the Narodniki or the Marxists."

He could not have told why or when Nekhaeva began telling him about herself:

"My father was a professor, a physiologist. He married when he was past forty and I was his first child. It seems to me I have had two fathers: one until I was seven years old; he had a kindly, smooth-shaven face, with large moustaches and merry, light eyes. He played the violoncello quite well. Then he changed into another person. His face became covered with a grey beard; he grew slovenly and irritable. He hid his eyes under smoked glasses, and often drank until he was dead drunk. He did that because my mother, after a still-birth, had died. I remember her as always dressed in white or pale blue, with a thick chestnut-coloured braid of hair falling over her bosom or down her back. She didn't look grown-up. Up to the very day of her death she was like a young girl — small, in full bloom, and very much alive. She died in the summertime when I was living in the village in a country house. I was then going on my seventh year. I remember how strange it was: I came home, but my mother wasn't there and my father wasn't the same man."

Nekhaeva told her story slowly, in a low voice, but without any sadness. This was strange, Clim thought. He glanced at her. As she spoke her eyes narrowed frequently, and her pencilled eyebrows twitched. She paused inappropriately in the middle of her sentences, and licked her lips; the smile that passed over them was even more inappropriate. Clim noticed for the first time that she had a handsome mouth, and with an urchin's curiosity he reflected:

"How would she look naked? Funny, probably."

The next instant he angrily condemned himself for such curiosity, frowned, and began to listen more attentively.

"To my childish questions — What is the sky made of? Why do people live? Why do people die? — my father would answer, 'That, as yet, nobody knows. You were born in order to find that out, Phima.' He would seat me on his knee, breathing into my face an odour of beer. His coarse beard unpleasantly pricked my neck and ears. He drank a dreadful amount of beer and became bloated from it. His cheeks puffed up and turned blue; his eyes filmed over with a kind of liquid fat. He became completely unpleasant to me, and aroused my antipathy still further because he could not — at that time I thought that he did not want to — answer a single one of my questions. It seemed to me that he was intentionally concealing from me fabulous mysteries which he had fathomed, in order to force me to solve them in the same way he made me solve problems in arithmetic. He never helped me with any of my school lessons, and forbade others to help me. I had to do everything myself. But I was especially incensed at him when he repeated: 'That isn't known. You make an effort to solve that yourself.' He frequently repeated these words."

"My father answered all my questions," Clim declared suddenly. His own words surprised him by their unexpectedness.

"Yes — did he?" asked Nekhaeva. "But then. . . ."

She cut short her phrase and sat meditating for a few seconds before she went on in her soft monotone. Clim listened to her thoughtfully, feeling that today he was not regarding her with his own eyes. No, she did not in the least resemble Lidia; but there was about her a faint similarity to himself. He could not decide whether this pleased him or not.

"Almost every night my father, drunk, played his violoncello. The howling sounds would wake me up. It seemed to me that he played only on the bass strings, and not so skillfully as he had once played. It was dark, quiet, and in the darkness there were

long stripes of sound even blacker than the darkness. I wasn't frightened by this black howling, but it was so wearisome that I wept. Suddenly my father died, having been sick for only four days in all. How repulsive figures and dates are! For four days he lay gasping, blue and swollen, looking through the moist cracks of his eyes at the ceiling; but he kept silent. On the day of his death he tried — the only time! — to tell me something; but all he said was: ' There, Claudia, you yourself will. . . .' He couldn't finish, but I knew what he had wanted to say. I didn't grieve especially, though I wept a great deal — probably because of fright. He was terrible in his coffin, so enormous and — blind."

Nekhaeva became silent. Bending her head, she smoothed the skirt over her knee with her fingers. Her story had put Clim in a lyric mood. He said:

" Yes, our fathers! . . ."

" ' The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge! ' Which one of the Prophets said that? I have forgotten." [20]

" I don't remember either," Clim said, though he had never read the Old Testament.

Nekhaeva hesitantly raised her arms and began to adjust her carelessly arranged hair, but it suddenly tumbled down over her shoulders. Clim was amazed to see how much there was of it, and how magnificent it was. The girl smiled:

" Excuse me."

Clim bowed, observing how awkwardly she tried to gather it up. He could think of nothing appropriate to say. The platitudes one usually used were not suitable with this girl. He was confused by a sense of awkwardness and a vague presentiment of danger.

" It's time for me to be going."

" Why? "

" It's late."

"Really?"

She let her hands fall. Her hair again fell over her shoulders and around her face, which became still smaller.

"Come again as soon as you can," she said in a strange voice, as though commanding him.

4

It was about midnight when Clim reached home. His brother's shoes were already set outside the door; Dmitri himself was apparently asleep. There was no response to Clim's knock, though a lamp was still burning in Dmitri's room. A thin yellow ribbon of light streamed through the keyhole into the dusk of the corridor. Clim felt hungry. He peeped cautiously into the dining-room. Marina and Kutuzov were pacing about in there shoulder to shoulder. Marina walked with her arms crossed on her bosom and her head bowed. Kutuzov, waving his cigarette close to his face, was saying in a low tone:

"We're possessed of but one force actually capable of transforming us. This is the force of scientific knowledge."

Marina's deep voice murmured plaintively:

"But what of art?"

"It consoles, but doesn't educate."

Clim drew up his face ironically and went off to bed thinking how much more interesting Nekhaeva was than this man!

Two days later, in the evening, he was again sitting in her room. He had come early and had invited her for a stroll, but in the street the girl kept a bored silence. Presently she complained that she felt cold.

"Let's ride to my place," she suggested.

"You'll feel still colder in a cab."

"No, it's much quicker," she said.

At home she seemed nervous and irritable. She twisted her neck like a bird when it hides its head under its wing, and looking away from Samghin, she said:

"I can't bear festive streets and people out on a holiday! Why must people, on the seventh day of the week, dress themselves up in clean garments and don the masks of happy men and women?"

Clim mockingly transmitted to her Kutuzov's statement about the force of science. Nekhaeva, shrugging her shoulders, remarked angrily:

"It's not likely that such people as he will be any better because anaemic electric lights blaze up everywhere!"

Clim, having drunk a bit more than usual, felt more at ease and spoke confidently:

"I realize that life is extremely complex; but Kutuzov doesn't simplify it; he mutilates it."

He was playing with a paper cutter, a curved bronze band with the gilt head of a bearded satyr for its handle. The knife slipped out of his hands and fell at the girl's feet. As he leaned over to pick it up, the chair tipped, and in an effort to regain his balance he grasped Nekhaeva's hand. The girl snatched her hand away, and Clim, deprived of support, fell to his knees. He could not remember exactly how everything happened after that; he remembered only warm hands on his cheeks and quick kisses on his mouth, and a choking whisper:

"Yes, yes! Oh, my God. . . ."

He was more amazed than pleased; Nekhaeva lay there beside him sobbing and whispering:

"To love, to love! Life is so frightful — it is torment if one doesn't love!"

Clim raised her head, placed it on his breast and pressed it close with his arm. He wanted to see her eyes. He felt ill at ease, guilty,

lying beside this strangely warm body. She was lying on her side; her thin breasts hung down awkwardly.

"My dearest!" she whispered. Her hot tears fell on his naked chest. "So simple, so dear. So awesome, so near."

He silently stroked her hair. Through the silk of the screen, embroidered with figures of silver birds, he gazed uneasily at the orange blur of the lamp. What would she do now? Could it be possible that she would remain in Peterburg, that she would not go away for a cure? For he had not wanted, had not sought, her caresses. He had but taken pity on her.

But along with his uneasiness he felt a pride in himself. Of all the men of her acquaintance she had chosen only him. His pride was intensified by her inquisitive caresses and her warm words, naïve to the verge of shamelessness.

"Oh, I know that I'm not handsome, but I want so much to love. I've been preparing myself for this as a devout person prepares for the Communion. And I can love — I can, yes?"

"Yes," said Clim very sincerely. "You're amazing. But still, this is bad for you, and you ought to go away."

She was not listening to him. Gasping and coughing, bending over him and gazing into his troubled eyes with hers from which tears were falling small and warm, she whispered:

"My dearest! You who are under a sentence."

Her tears seemed inappropriate. What was there to cry about? He had not offended her, had not refused to love her. The emotion that brought these tears — an emotion incomprehensible to Clim — frightened him. He kissed Nekhaeva's lips so that she might not talk, and involuntarily compared her with Marguerita. The latter, who had been more handsome, had fatigued him only physically. This girl was whispering:

"Just think: half the men and women in the whole world in these few moments are loving one another, even as you and I

are. Hundreds of thousands are born for love and hundreds of thousands die, having ceased to love. My dearest, my unexpected one. . . ."

"Unexpected? Really?"

The orange-coloured screen was like an evening sun obstinately refusing to hide itself behind the clouds. Time seemed to have paused.

"We submissively and passionately bring ourselves in sacrifice to an awesome mystery which has created us."

Clim embraced her and covered the girl's hot mouth with a hard, warm kiss. Then she suddenly fell asleep, her brows raised in utter fatigue, her mouth open. Her small, thin face wore the expression of one stricken mute, who wanted to cry out, but was unable to. Clim quietly got up and dressed himself.

5

He left her room very late. The moon was shining with that distinct clarity which reveals much on earth that is superfluous. The dry snow crunched under his feet with a glassy sound. The enormous houses gazed at one another through the cataracts of their frosted windows. Near their gates lay black shadows of night watchmen. In the heaven's vastness a few dim stars seemed to have lost their way. Everything was clear.

Physically tired, Clim walked along slowly while the radiant cold of the night clarified his confused mind. Mentally he began humming, to the tune of an operetta, the words:

"But was there really a boy? Perhaps there was no boy at all."

He rubbed his benumbed hands and sighed in relief. Nekhaeva, then, was merely pretending to pessimism, pretending so that, having cast an unusual light upon herself, she might attract a

man to her. Such instinctive ingenuity is shown by females of certain insect species in attracting mates, Clim reflected. In addition to the joy of his discovery Clim felt a vague malice against somebody. It was difficult to understand: Was it against Nekhaeva or against himself? Or against something abstract and elusive which would not permit him to identify it or find any motive?

Then he remembered that a letter from his mother was in his pocket. He had received it that day. The letter, very brief, informed him that cultured people were under an obligation to work; that she wanted to open a school of music in her town, and that Varavka planned to publish a paper and to make his way to the mayoralty.

Lidia would be the daughter of a mayor. It was possible that, in due time, he would tell her of his affair with Nekhaeva. The best way to tell it would be in a farcical manner, he decided.

He forced himself to think of Nekhaeva again. His feeling of malice was gone now, and his thought of her was objective and benign. What he had done, actually, was not unusual. Every girl wants to be a woman. Clim began walking more and more rapidly. Dawn was breaking, but the sky, turning grey in the east, was cold and unfriendly. Clim Samghin made a wry face; it was awkward, getting home in the early morning. The chambermaid, of course, would spread the news that he had not spent the night at home.

6

He awoke in a vigorous mood. The unexpected turn in his affair with Nekhaeva had buoyed him up and strengthened his belief that, no matter what people talked about, behind their words something perfectly simple was hidden, as had been proved in Nekhaeva's case. He felt no desire to go to her in the eve-

ning, but he decided that if he did not go to her she would come to see him, and there was a chance of her compromising him in his brother's eyes, and in Marina's eyes and in the eyes of all those who boarded at the house. For some reason he particularly did not want Marina to hear about his liaison with Nekhaeva; but he did not care if Elizaveta Spivak heard about it.

Lying in bed, Clim recalled Nekhaeva's avid, eager caresses with some concern. It now seemed to him that there had been something unhealthy about them, something completely despairing. She had pressed herself so close to him that it seemed as if she were anxious to submerge herself in him. But there was a childish tenderness about her, too. For fleeting instants she even awoke tenderness in him.

"I must go to her," he decided, and in the evening he went, telling his brother that he was going to the circus.

In Nekhaeva's room a rotund little crone was silently putting things in order, picking up books from the floor and wiping them off with a rag. She nodded her head politely as she took up each object and dusted it as carefully as if the vase or book in her hands were alive and frail as a newly hatched chick. When Clim entered the room she raised a warning finger and hissed:

"Sh, sh — she's sleeping!"

The old woman was as fantastic as the room and its mistress.

"Tell her that Samghin dropped in."

From behind the screen sounded a feeble voice:

"Is that you? Oh, do come in, please!"

Clim entered the yellowish gloom behind the screen, concerned with but one desire: to hide from Nekhaeva the fact that he had seen through her — that she was no longer a mystery to him. But he immediately felt his temples and forehead turn cold.

The blanket was stretched so smoothly over the bed that it seemed as if there were nobody under it, but only a head lying by itself on the pillow, with eyes glowing unnaturally under the grey streak of forehead.

"Acting," he said to himself, after a moment's thought, for the word did not come immediately to his memory.

"I have a temperature of thirty-six and six," she said in a soft, apologetic voice. "Sit down. I'm so glad. Aunt Tasya, make some tea, won't you?"

"All right," came the answer in a squeaky, toy-like voice.

Taking a bare arm from under the blanket, Nekhaeva again wrapped herself up to her chin. Her hand was moistly warm and unpleasantly light; Clim shuddered when he pressed it. But her face, that had become deeply flushed, shadowed now by her loosened hair and lit up by a happy smile, suddenly seemed very dear to Clim, and her burning eyes filled him with both sorrow and pride.

This evening Nekhaeva did not recite any poetry, nor talk about poets, nor of her fears about life and death. She talked only of love, and in language Clim had never heard nor read. Smiling, playing with the fingers of his hand, breathing fast, she whispered her vivid words of love; and Clim, not doubting the sincerity of them, thought: Not everybody can boast of being the object of such love! At the same time she was so childishly pitiful that he, too, wished to be sincere with her. In her words he sensed so much intoxicated happiness that they intoxicated him, arousing a desire in him to embrace and kiss her body. A strange idea came to him: he might pinch, bite, or torture her any way at all, and she would accept it all from him as a caress. She asked him in a whisper:

"I do please you, don't I? You do love me a little?"

"Yes," Clim answered, believing it as he said it. "Yes!"

He looked into the widened pupils of her half-mad eyes and they revealed in their depths something of which he thought involuntarily:

"Then this is love?"

And immediately he remembered Lidia's eyes, and Elizaveta Spivak's mute gaze. He vaguely realized that he was taking lessons in love from one who loved genuinely, and that this was important to him. He knew that this girl was doing something fine to him, helping him, adding something to the stature of his personality. When he was alone with her he felt no confusion, no strange, unexplainable sensations. He did not dissemble before her, did not parade before her as his own other people's ideas. Nekhaeva was saying to him:

"How much more aristocratic you are than the others. How splendidly restrained you are! It is so pleasant to see a person like you who doesn't boast about his ideas and his knowledge, like everybody else does, everyone posing before everyone else. You have a respect for the mysteries of your soul — that's a rare thing. I can't bear people who shout, like blind men who have lost their way in a forest. 'I, I, I,' they shout."

Clim agreed with her:

"Yes, no matter what they shout about they, in the end, shout only about their own 'I.'"

"That is because their 'I' is colourless; they don't see it," she eagerly echoed his words.

Especially precious in Nekhaeva was her ability to look on people from a distance and from above, as a god on Olympus might look at men. In her mind even people who were spoken of respectfully, who were written about with praise — celebrities — became tiny and unimportant in the face of that mysterious something which she felt. This mysterious something did not agitate Samghin very much, but he experienced pleasure because

this girl, in making great people so simple, inspired in him a feeling of equality with them.

7

He began visiting her every evening, and, sating himself with her speeches, felt himself growing spiritually and mentally. His affair, of course, had been discovered and Clim knew that this gave him prestige. Elizaveta Spivak studied him with new curiosity and approval. Marina adopted a more friendly tone in speaking to him. His brother apparently envied him; Dmitri Samghin became gloomier, more taciturn, and looked at Marina with his eyes blinking, as if he were offended.

Clim felt within himself the play of a gay condescension toward everybody, a teasing desire to slap Kutuzov's shoulder when he, with his customary obstinacy, tried to prove the necessity of studying Marx and Mussorgski. Forcing himself on the mute, quiet Spivak, who forever sat before his piano, he would say:

"Rimski Korsakov's worst opera has more talent in it than Verdi's best work."

"Don't shout in my ear," Spivak would answer him.

It was tiresome at home; everybody sang the same old ballads, duets, and trios; as usual, Kutuzov got angry with Marina because she sang off key, and, also as usual, he and Dmitri argued with Turoboev, making Clim want to jeer at them.

Nekhaeva was up again. The red spots on her cheeks burned even more vividly; shadows lay under her eyes, making her cheek bones stand out more sharply and emphasizing the bright glitter in her eyes. Marina, whenever they met, would shout at her angrily:

"You're losing your mind! Where are your doctor's eyes? Why, this is suicide!"

Nekhaeva would smile at her, licking her dry lips, then seat herself on the divan; and soon her tiny voice would be heard trying to convince Dmitri Samghin about something.

"The *savante's* efforts to analyse the phenomena of nature are just about as valuable as a child's tearing apart a doll in an effort to find out what's inside it."

"But isn't that rather trite, Miss?" Kutuzov asked, pulling at his beard and contracting his eyebrows in a frown. She ignored him, but Turoboev remarked indolently:

"And inside, usually, there turns out to be either something completely baffling or some kind of rubbish, something quite useless in the struggle for existence."

When she had been there an hour, or an hour and a half, Nekhaeva would get ready to go home. Clim went along as an escort — not always willingly.

She was fond of giving him books and reproductions of famous paintings. She made him a present of a desk pad, on the leather of which was embossed a faun. She also gave him an inkwell of bizarre design. She had many quaint little superstitions, of which she seemed to be ashamed. She was, apparently, also ashamed of her belief and faith in God. Standing with Clim in the Kazan cathedral during an Easter mass, she shuddered, swayed, and began sobbing softly as the choir sang *Christ is Arisen*.

But afterwards, walking in the street, under the black sky and the cold wind that angrily powdered them with dry snow, and scattered over the city the tenuous pealing of church bells, she began to cough and said guiltily:

"Is my crying fit absurd? But then, I'm shaken by anything emotional — and church music in Russia is certainly emotional."

Shadowy figures of people came out of the stone cathedral and scurried away in all directions. In the all too meagre light the figures seemed darker than usual; white streaks of petticoats

could be seen flashing at the bottom of the women's skirts like white accents in the gloom.

Clim, as he listened to Nekhaeva, was reflecting that the province was both more solemn and more joyous than this chill city that had been cut in two twice, cut methodically along its length, once by the river, squeezed in by granite, and once by the endless Nevsky canal, which also seemed to have cut its way through stone. The people moved over the Prospect like animated stones. The carriages rolling along were harnessed to machine-like horses. The brazen pealing did not, between the stone walls, have as mellifluous a song as in the province town, which was built of wood.

Nekhaeva, holding to Clim's arm, discussed the gloomy poesy of the liturgy for the dead, recalling to him, against his will, the fairy tale about the simpleton who had sung funeral chants at a wedding. They walked against the wind. It was difficult for her to talk; the wind took her breath. Clim, in the tone of an older person, said:

"Don't talk; keep your mouth closed, and breathe through your nose."

But after hiring a cab and riding toward the Premirovas', she began talking again, covering her mouth with her muff.

"You, of course, consider all I say as prejudiced, but I love the poesy of prejudices. Someone has said that 'prejudices are the fragments of old verities.' That's very wise. I believe that old verities will rise again from the dead, even more splendid and beautiful."

Clim listened to her, feeling that a desire was growing in this girl to provoke him to a dispute in order to contradict him. It was not the first time he had noticed this; he concealed from Nekhaeva with difficulty the fact that she was tiring him. Her hysterical caresses had become a habit and monotonous; her speech

was repetitious. And with ever greater frequency he was embarrassed by her strange attacks of silence that were so full of interrogation. One felt awkward with a person who studied one silently, as though forming opinions about something. Nekhaeva's hacking coughing reminded him how infectious tuberculosis could be.

8

The Premirovas' room was brightly lighted. On a table, decked with flowers, glistened a tray of varicoloured bottles, glasses and goblets. The steel of the knives glittered; the light from the lamp was pleasantly reflected on the wide, blue borders of a *faience* platter, and the light also shone on a small mound of multicoloured eggs. In the middle of the table, on another platter, a suckling pig lay ensconced in a gay froth of cream and red horseradish, surrounded on three sides by a goldenly browned goose, a turkey hen, and a huge ham.

" Come to table, please! " the little old Premirova lispingly invited. She was dressed all in silk, with a lace cap pinned to her grey hair. She was the first one to sit down, and said with obvious pride :

" I have everything arranged according to the old ways."

Marina sat beside her, in a magnificent lavender dress, with puffs at the shoulders, and a great many pleats and tucks on the skirt which made her big body even broader. Above her heart, like a cross of honour, a little enamelled watch was pinned. Dmitri Samghin took a seat on the other side of the old woman. He was dressed in a white jacket, and his hair was combed in such a way that he looked like a clerk in a flour store. Turoboev, the dandy, was at the far end of the table from Clim. Kutuzov sat between Marina and Elizaveta Spivak. In a frock coat, worn and narrow, Kutuzov sat with his shoulders hunched up, as if he were

stoop-shouldered, a position not at all becoming to his broad figure. He immediately said to Marina:

"You look like a 'goodbye town.'"

"What's all this, now?" she asked angrily.

Kutuzov amiably explained:

"It's a movable battle-tower contrivance, which in the olden times was used in besieging towns."

Marina, arching her heavy eyebrows, reflected awhile, seemed to recall something, and, blushing deeply, answered:

"That's very rude."

Dmitri Samghin tapped his spoon on the edge of the table and opened his mouth, but did not say anything, only smacked his lips. Kutuzov, smiling to himself, began to whisper something in Elizaveta's ear. She was wearing a light blue dress, without any ornaments or silly bladder-like puffs on her shoulders. Its chaste simplicity and her severely-combed chestnut hair intensified the sharpness of her face and the cold glitter of her calm eyes. Clim noticed that Turoboev smiled wryly when she nodded her head affirmatively to Kutuzov.

Nekhaeva, in a white, childlike dress that was somewhat eccentric, wrinkled up her nose, gazing at the great quantity of food, and cautiously coughed into her handkerchief. She reminded one of a poor relative, invited for charity's sake. This idea irritated Clim. His mistress should have been more colourful and attractive. And she ate more fastidiously than usual. One might have thought that she was doing this to show off.

They stuffed themselves greedily, and soon had eaten all they could. Then there began one of those disconnected conversations familiar to Clim since childhood. Someone complained of the cold, and immediately, to Clim's astonishment, the taciturn Elizaveta Spivak began rapturously to praise Caucasian nature. Turo-

boev listened to her for a minute or two, then yawned and said languidly:

"But the most interesting thing in the Caucasus is the tragic braying of the asses. Apparently only they realize the incongruity of the cliffs, ravines, glaciers, and all this famous magnificence of mountainous nature."

He spoke nervously, exhaling smoke as he studied the top of his cigarette. Elizaveta Spivak did not answer him. Old Premirova, sighing, said:

"My father was killed in the Caucasus."

She, too, got no answer from anybody; so she quickly added:

"He resembled Lermontov."

But even these words went unnoticed. The little old woman, inured to everything, wiped with her napkin the silver cup out of which she had been drinking wine, made the sign of the cross, and silently left the room.

Clim, knowing that Turoboev was in love with Elizaveta Spivak, and successfully in love with her — if one were to judge by the three blows he had heard that night on the ceiling of his brother's room — wondered. Turoboev's attitude toward this woman had become mocking and irritating. Turoboev made sport of her opinions; it seemed that he did not want her to talk with anybody in his presence.

"Evidently they have quarrelled," Samghin guessed, and knew that this idea gave him a pleasant feeling.

His head was buzzing, and he felt a desire to be noticed. He walked through the room, listening, looking intently at people, and discovered something amusing in almost all of them: there was Marina who had almost forced a light-haired, large-nosed youth to the wall. She was saying to him:

"You ought to write prose — you'll earn more money at prose, and quicker fame."

"But what if I'm a poet?" asked the youth in amazement, rubbing his forehead.

"Don't rub your forehead; your eyes get red if you do that," Marina said.

Turoboev was explaining to a tall chap with Jewish features:

"No, I have no ambition to write history. I'm perfectly satisfied with Professor Kluchevski. He writes excellent history. I was told that he looks like Czar Vasilii Shuisky — he has written history as it would have been written by this crafty Czar. . . ."

His words were drowned out by Dmitri's angry voice:

"That's no news. The resemblance between Dionysos and Christ has long ago been noted."

As always, Nekhaeva's tiny voice sounded provokingly:

"In Russia men know nothing but the lyricism and pathos of destruction."

"You don't know very much about Russia, Miss."

"A snowy love, an icy compassion."

"Oho! Wh-at words!"

"'Thought-up' souls!"

Nekhaeva was shouting too loudly. Clim reflected that she must have drunk more than she should have, and tried to hold himself aloof from her. Elizaveta Spivak, sitting on the divan, asked him:

"Are there any other Samghins in your city?"

"Yes — my mother."

"I suppose, then, that it is she who has invited my husband to organize a school of music there?"

Dmitri, somewhat tipsy, and very red, laughingly said:

"Why, you've already asked that!"

"Really?" she exclaimed, in wonder. "I've a poor memory."

She got up lightly from the divan and, swaying, went into Marina's room, from which Nekhaeva's shouts floated in. Clim

followed her with his glance, smiling. It seemed to him that her shoulders, her hips, were trying to cast off the woven stuff which covered them. She deluged herself with very strong perfumes, and Clim suddenly recalled that he had noticed it for the first time two weeks ago, when, passing him, he heard her singing the ballad, *On the Knolls of Georgia*. He had remembered especially a disturbing line: " 'By thee, by thee alone!' " But what if she had been singing:

" '. . . By thee alone, my man?' "

He went into Marina's room, where Kutuzov, who had opened the skirts of his frock and thrust his hands into his pockets, stood like a monument in the middle of the room, his eyebrows raised high. He was listening to Turoboev's speech. Clim saw Turoboev for the first time speaking without the grimaces and sneers that usually distorted his handsome face.

" It's perfectly clear that culture is perishing, for the reason that people have grown used to living at the expense of other people's strength, and this habit has permeated all of men's relations and actions. I understand that this habit began with man's desire to lighten labour; but it's become his second nature. Not only has it assumed ugly forms, but its root is undermining the meaning of labour and all its poetry."

Kutuzov smiled amiably.

" You're an idealist, Turoboev, and a romanticist; and that's completely out of date."

Marina was angrily jerking at the ventilator cord. Elizaveta Spivak walked up to her, wishing to help her; but Marina, tearing away the cord, threw it on the floor.

" All men will leave the room! " she commanded. " Seraphima, you're going to sleep with me. They're all drunk — there's nobody to see you home."

" I'm not drunk! " Clim declared.

Elizaveta, standing on a chair, was stubbornly trying to open the ventilator. Kutuzov approached her, lifted her like a child from the chair, set her on the floor and, opening the ventilator, said:

"Let's go to Samghin — the elder. Shall we go, Aunt Liza?"

They went.

9

In the dining-room Turoboev snatched a bottle of wine from the table; but Elizaveta took it from him and put it on the floor. Clim suddenly felt a sinister question burning in him: Why did life cast at his feet such women as the meretricious Marguerita — or Nekhaeva? He entered his brother's room last and a few minutes later interrupted Kutuzov's and Turoboev's conversation, suddenly saying what he had wanted to say for a long time.

"Since my childhood I've heard speeches about the people, about the need of revolution, about everything which is spoken of by people in order to show themselves off before one another as being cleverer than they really are. Who — who says this? The intelligentsia."

Faintly realizing that he had begun in too provocative a tone, and that the words that had been his favorites for so long a time were coming hard to his memory and were not released from his tongue with enough facility, Samghin was silent for a minute, studying everybody. Elizaveta, standing near the window, was spreading herself like a blue blotch over the window-panes. His brother was standing near the table, holding a sheet of newspaper before his eyes and gazing over the top of it at Kutuzov who, smiling, was saying something to him.

"They're not listening to me," Clim thought and grew angry.

Turoboev was sitting in a corner, leaning forward. He was smoking, puffing rings of smoke out into the room. He said quietly:

"Your uncle, as I've heard. . . ."

Clim began to rage:

"What do you want to say? My uncle is the very same product of the decay of the upper crusts of society as you are. Like all the intelligentsia, he can't find a place for himself in life and for that reason. . . ."

Turoboev said, from his corner:

"You, Samghin, have become a Marxist, apparently. But I think that's because at table you mixed white wine with red."

Dmitri burst into loud laughter. Kutuzov said to him:

"Don't interfere."

Clim wanted to have them argue with him; he spoke ever more provocatively, adopting Varavka's ideas:

"The people itself never makes any revolution; it's caused by its leaders. Submitting to them for a time, it soon begins to oppose the ideas forced on it from outside. The people knows and feels that evolution represents their only law. The leaders try in every way to break this law. That's what history teaches."

"A curious history," Turoboev said.

"And rather old," Kutuzov added and got up. "We-ell, time for me to be going."

All Clim's thoughts came to an abrupt ending; his words were gone. It seemed to him that Spivak, Kutuzov, Turoboev, had grown taller and had swelled up. Only his brother had remained just as he had been. He was standing in the middle of the room, holding his ears, and swaying.

"Kutuzov, you have a disagreeable way of standing with your left foot thrust out. That means you already consider yourself a leader and are imagining yourself as a monument."

"In order to stand under the snow and rain," Dmitri Samghin muttered, clasping his brother around the waist. Clim repulsed him with a thrust of his shoulder, and went on furiously:

" But, according to your faith, Kutuzov, you can't pretend to a leader's rôle. Marx doesn't sanction it. There are no leaders. History is made by the masses. Liev Tolstoi developed this mistaken idea more comprehensibly and more simply than Marx. You ought to read *War and Peace*."

Clim Samghin again thrust his brother away:

" Do read it! Incidentally, your family name is the same as that of the commander who was commanded by the army."

Feeling certain that he had said something caustic, something witty, Clim burst into laughter, closing his eyes; but when he opened them there was nobody in the room except his brother, who was pouring water out of a carafe into a tumbler.

Clim did not remember anything more.

IX

1

HE awoke with his head feeling heavy and a dim memory of some sort of mistake, some *gaucherie* he had committed yesterday. The room glowed with the unpleasantly diffused light of the sun hidden in the colourless void outside the window. Dmitri came in. His wet, smoothly combed hair seemed greasily smeared with butter; his reddish lips and his womanish, somewhat swollen face were ugly. From his glowering gaze Clim knew that he would immediately hear something unpleasant.

"Well, now, how'd you manage all that yesterday?" his brother began, his eyes downcast as he worked with his suspenders to shorten them. "You kept mum—kept mum. Everybody thought you were a serious-minded man. Then you suddenly burst out with such childish stuff. A fellow doesn't know how to take you. Of course, you drank a bit. But then they say: 'That which the sober man hath in mind, the drunkard hath on the tip of his tongue.'"

Dmitri spoke thoughtfully and with difficulty. Having adjusted his suspenders he sat down on a creaking chair.

"It was, you know, exactly as if a strange musician had hopped into an orchestra and, just to make mischief, had started playing something different from what everybody else was playing."

"What a dull, untalented fellow," Clim was thinking. "He's as stupid as Tanya Kulikova."

And suddenly he spoke up:

"Well, enough of that! You aren't my tutor. You'd do better to restrain from ludicrous efforts to pun. It is poor wit to say *Natashka* instead of *natiyazhka,* and 'simprint' instead of 'misprint.' It's even less witty to call Botany Bay, Buttany Bay, or the Adriatic Sea the Idiotic Sea."

Angry, he even told his brother something he had not intended to mention, how one night, when he was returning from the theatre, he had been softly ascending the staircase and had suddenly heard above him, on the landing, the low voices of Kutuzov and Marina:

"But when will you tell this to Samghin?"

"I can't get up the courage. It's a pity, he's so . . ."

"So am I."

There came the sound of a kiss, and Marina's loud voice saying:

"Don't you dare!"

Kutuzov said something else, as Clim noiselessly went down again and began walking up the staircase, this time loudly. But when he had reached the landing there was nobody there. He had had an impulse to tell his brother immediately about this conversation, but, thinking it over, he decided it was too soon to tell him. The affair promised to be interesting, its chief characters both were so fat, of the flesh fleshly. Kutuzov and Clim's brother would probably quarrel, and this would be a good thing for his brother, who was much too submissive to Kutuzov.

After telling Dmitri about this conversation, Clim added, teasingly:

"Of course, she'll prefer him!"

As he talked he gazed at the ceiling, and could not see what Dmitri was doing; but suddenly two heavy bangs made him shudder and jump up in bed. His brother was striking a book

against his palm as he stood in the middle of the room in Kutuzov's statue-like attitude. In a voice that did not seem his own he stammered:

"S-such th-things are told by chambermaids. This is e-excusable only on a morning-after."

Slamming the book down on the table, he left the room, leaving Clim so stunned that only after several minutes did he resolve the matter:

"Dmitri never dared before to talk to me like that. I must have an explanation from him."

He decided to go to his brother and convince him that he had told the story about Marina out of sympathy, inasmuch as he felt that his brother was being deceived. But after he finished washing and dressing he discovered that his brother and Kutuzov had gone to Cronstadt.

Elizaveta Spivak had caught cold and was staying in bed. Marina, very preoccupied, was running up and down the stairs. She frequently looked out of the windows and waved her arms absurdly as if she were trying to catch moths invisible to anyone except her. When Clim expressed a desire to visit the invalid, Marina said:

"I'll ask her."

But Clim felt certain she had not asked; he was not called upstairs. He was bored. After breakfast, as usual, the little man Spivak descended to the dining-room:

"I won't disturb anyone, will I?" he asked, and walked over to the piano. It seemed that even if there had been no one in the room he would have asked whether he was disturbing anyone or not. And if he had been answered: "Yes, you are," he would nevertheless have sneaked up to the instrument. Clim could not picture him otherwise than at the piano, riveted to it like a convict to a wheelbarrow which he cannot move from the spot.

Poking with his fingers at the discoloured ivories of the keyboard, he drew out of the black contrivance low notes, unusual chords; and with his head bent to one side, deeply sunk between his shoulders, with his eyes crossed, he listened intently to the sounds. He spoke little, and only on two themes. With an air of mystery and a quiet rapture he discoursed on the Chinese scale; and plaintively, almost bitterly, he lamented the imperfections of the European ear.

"Our ear is clogged up with the noise of stone cities, of the cabs — Yes, yes! Really pure music can come only out of perfect silence. Beethoven was deaf; but Wagner's hearing ear was incomparably worse than Beethoven's. Because of that his music is nothing more than a chaotic jumble of data for music. Mussorgsky had to deafen himself with wine in order to hear his genius in the depth of his soul — do you understand?"

Clim Samghin thought this man an innocent. But not infrequently the little figure of the musician, clinging to the black piano, gave him the eerie impression of a graveyard monument: a large black stone, and at its foot a man quietly pouring out his grief.

2

A difficult period began for Clim. The general attitude toward him had changed sharply, and no one troubled to conceal this fact. Kutuzov no longer listened to his concise, carefully considered phrases, and greeted him indifferently, without smiling. His brother left his rooms the first thing in the morning, and did not return until late at night. Dmitri was looking tired and thinner; he had little to say. Whenever he happened to meet Clim he smiled confusedly. When Clim tried to offer an explanation, Dmitri quietly but firmly said:

"Drop it!"

Turoboev grimaced more than formerly, gazing off at the ceiling, without noticing Clim.

"What are you forever looking up for?" the old woman Premirova asked him one day.

Through his teeth, Turoboev answered:

"I'm waiting for the flies to come to life."

Nekhaeva did not leave the city. Clim noticed that her health was improved. She coughed less, and had even, apparently, taken on weight. This fact upset him greatly. He had heard that pregnancy not only retarded the development of tuberculosis, but sometimes cured it. The thought that he might have a child by this girl frightened Clim.

She had become quieter, and no longer spoke as warmly or as zestfully as she once had. Her tenderness had become cloying; into her adoring glance there had come something of the little innocent. This glance made Clim wish to extinguish its half-insane glitter with a mocking word, but he could never find a fitting moment for it. Every time he made ready to say something sharp and unkind to her, Nekhaeva's eyes immediately changed their trusting expression and stared at him searchingly.

"What are you laughing at?" she would ask him.

"I'm not laughing," Clim protested, losing his courage.

"But I can see you are," she insisted.

Whereupon he became nervously timid, expecting her at any moment to ask him his plans as to their future relationship.

Peterburg had gradually become more odious to him because Nekhaeva lived in it.

3

Spring was approaching slowly. The sun came out briefly from the slow-moving clouds that every day dismally sowed the earth

with rain. Reluctantly it shone for a moment on the mire of the streets, the soot on the windows of the houses, then disappeared again. A cold wind blew from the sea. The river surged by, dark and swollen; its heavy waves licked hungrily at the granite of its banks. From the window of his room Clim saw beyond the roofs the fingers of the factory smokestacks raised threateningly to the sky. They reminded him of Kutuzov's talk of historical previsions and prophecies; reminded him of the hatchet-faced workman who, on holidays, crept furtively up the back stairs to Dmitri's room, and of the mysterious girl with a face like a Tartar woman's, who visited his brother now and then. This girl was silent as a deaf-mute, and her narrow pitch-black eyes squinted like a blind person's.

Sometimes it seemed as if the heavy smoke from the factory chimneys had a strange chemical effect: rising upward and spreading over the city, it seemed to be corroding it. The roofs of the houses melted, vanished, floated upward; then settled down again out of the smoke. The phantom-like city swayed in its instability. This impression strangely disturbed Samghin. It reminded him of the Slavophiles, who did not like Peter; it made him recall *The Brazen Horseman,* the painfully sensitive stories of Gogol.

He did not like the needle of the Fortress of Peter and Paul, and the angel which it transfixed. The Fortress was spoken of with a respectful hatred; but occasionally in the hatred there was a note of envy; the student Popov rapturously called the fortress "The P-antheon."

His pronunciation of the *p* sounded like a shot from a toy pistol; the rest of the word followed meekly after.

"B-akunin," he would say, snapping his fingers. "Nechae. P-rince Krop-potkin . . ."

There was something incongruous about the granite mass of

the Cathedral of Isaac, and in the grey wooden scaffolding fastened to it, on which Clim never saw a single worker. Unusually large soldiers trod the streets with their machine-like step. One of them, marching in front, blew piercingly on a tiny fife; another beat hard on a drum. In the mocking malignancy of the tiny fife, in the hundred-voiced whistles of the factories which disrupted his sleep early in the morning, Clim felt something which was driving him from the city.

He noticed springing up within him thoughts, images, analogies, foreign to his nature. Going through the Palace Square, or past it, he noted that only rarely did anyone even walk over the square, which should have been crowded with a joyously noisy throng of people. The column of Alexander reminded Clim of a factory smokestack out of which a bronze angel had flown and become seemingly frozen in mid-air, pausing there as if he wondered where he should throw his cross. The Czar's palace, always silent, with vacant windows, gave the impression of a house that was never lived in. Surrounded by the semicircle of bleak, rusty iron-hued buildings that shut in the desolate square, the palace was a gloomy thing. Clim reflected that it would be better if the house of the master of Russia were supported by the awesome caryatids of the Hermitage.

Contemplating this square, Clim recalled the noisy university and the students in his class — men who were studying to arraign and defend criminals. They were at that very moment arraigning professors, ministers and the Czar. The sovereignty of the Czar was defended by people who were not at all alert, without talent or courage. There were only a handful of them, and they were sinking under their enemies.

Clim had become bored with the endless disputes of the Narodniki and the Marxists, and he was irritated because he could not decide which of them was making the cruder mistake.

He was firmly convinced that both of them were wrong. For which group was the law of a gradual development of life more compulsory? he wondered. Sometimes he felt that the Marxists understood more thoroughly than the Narodniki the incontrovertibility of the law of evolution; but nevertheless he regarded them both as representatives of that "Kutuzovishness" which had become hateful to him. It was unbearable to watch the chattering little midgets in whom the folly of youth had inspired an impudent desire to break the conventional, sanctioned flow of the age's custom.

He was especially roused by arguments on the subjects: Do the leaders possess the will of the mass; or does the mass, having created a leader, make him its tool and its victim? The thought that he, Samghin, could be the tool of anyone's will incensed and frightened him. He thought of his father's explanation of the biblical story of Abraham's sacrifice, and of Nekhaeva's irritated assertation:

"The people is the enemy of man! The biographies of almost all great men and women will proclaim this to you."

Clim found that it was true. Some monstrous maw was swallowing up, one after the other, the best men and women of the land, and belching from its stomach the enemies of culture, such as Bolotnikov, Razin, Pugachev.[21]

The student Popov was becoming a bore to Clim. This eager fellow tirelessly ran through the corridors and the auditoriums, his arms jerking at their shoulder joints convulsively, as though they had been thrown out of joint. Pouncing on his colleagues, he would snatch from the pockets of his worn jacket letters and mimeographed sheets of paper, and stutter:

"S-samghin, just listen: from Odessa they write: The s-student body is the vanguard. The university is a point for the organization of c-cultural strength. . . . Regional organizations

are the embryos of an All-Russian union . . . from K-kazan we are informed . . ."

There were several who bustled about officiously like Popov. Clim particularly disliked them. He was also a little afraid of them, and he saw that they frightened not only him, but practically all the students who took their studies seriously.

They constantly thrust upon their fellow-students tickets for *soirées,* for the benefit of the Regional Organization movement, or for concerts organized for mysterious purposes.

The lectures, arguments and whispers — all this chaotic noise of hundreds of young people intoxicated with a thirst for life and action — so deafened Samghin that he could not hear even his own thoughts. It seemed that all men were possessed with the madness of a game which, the more dangerous it was, infatuated all the more. Suddenly but firmly he determined to transfer to one of the provincial universities, where people lived, most probably, more quietly and simply. It was necessary to sever his ties with Nekhaeva. In her presence he felt himself a Croesus who, bestowing generous largesse to a beggar woman, at the same time despised her. The pretext for his sudden departure was his mother's letter, which informed him that she was not well.

4

On his way to Nekhaeva to bid her farewell he glumly anticipated tears and pleadings. He was almost touched to tears himself when the girl, putting her thin arms around his neck, began to whisper:

"I know that you weren't so very much — that you weren't so very much in love with me. Yes! I know it. But I infinitely — all of me — thank you for the hours we have spent together."

She pressed close to him with all the strength of her frail body and sobbed warmly:

"God grant that you never know utter solitude, as I have known it."

Clasping her thin, bony fingers together, she touched Clim's forehead, shoulders and breast. She trembled, barely able to stand up, and quickly wiped away the tears from her face.

"I am afraid my poor faith in God merits little attention; yet I shall pray for you to somebody — I shall! I want your life to be a good one and an easy one."

Her weeping was not oppressive to watch; it was almost pleasant, even though a trifle sad. When Clim left her he was convinced he had bidden farewell to her forever, and that this affair had enriched him greatly. That night, on the train, he reflected:

"So Lidia Timopheëvna, I'm returning with the shield."

Having decided to stop over for a day or so in Moscow, in order to see Lidia, he mentally jested:

"The examinations for the university can be postponed, but this examination I'll go through with at once."

As he was falling asleep he remembered that his letters to Lidia, which he had so laboured over in an effort to make them amusing, had received only two replies from her, both of them had been brief and indifferent. One of her letters had said:

"I do not like your calling this girl you know Deathiashkina, and do not consider it funny."

"She isn't talented. Her work at the *gymnasium* was always corrected by Luba Somov," he reminded himself, and, consoled by this, fell fast asleep.

The spring morning was shining proudly over Moscow. Horseshoes clicked and wagons rumbled on the uneven cobbles of the street; in the warm, pale-blue air the copper church bells

boomed festively; over the worn sidewalks of the narrow, crooked streets buoyant people walked happily; their stride was lively; the sound of their tramping feet was clearly audible; they did not drag them, as the people in Peterburg did. There was more noise here, and of a different tone, less dank and muffled than in Peterburg.

"In the voice of Moscow one hears more clearly the voice of man," Clim reflected. This thought pleased him; it sounded like a proverb. Swaying in a creaking hired carriage, he gazed about looking at everything as a man who has been for a long time in a foreign country looks again upon the place of his birth.

"Perhaps I should transfer myself to the university here?" he asked himself.

At the hotel he was met with that artistically assumed and obliging Moscow simple-heartedness, which, being in its nature unfamiliar to Clim, intensified his impression of simplicity and clarity. At midday he went off to call on Lidia.

"This is Sunday; she must be at home."

He walked slowly through the confusing lanes, mulling over what he would say to Lidia, how he would conduct himself when talking with her. He scrutinized the motley, cosy little houses and their friendly windows, with flowers on their window sills.

Above the fences the trees raised their branches toward the sun; in the air one breathed a fine, sweet odour of buds newly opened.

From around a corner, arm in arm, two students came, whistling a march in unison. One of them suddenly halted on the sidewalk and began talking to a country woman who was washing window panes. His companion tried to get him away:

"Quit that, Volodka! Come on!"

Clim Samghin stepped off the sidewalk, skirting the students,

but immediately his shoulder was seized by a strong hand. He spun around angrily to face Makarov, who cried joyously:

"Klimushka? Where from? Allow me to introduce you: Samghin,—Liutov."

"A merchant's son, in the third co-arse of the humouristic faculty," the skew-eyed, half-intoxicated student recommended himself facetiously, with his head bent to one side.

"Volodka! This is the fellow who stopped me from shooting myself."

"You ought to be given a gold medal, colleague! Inasmuch as, having preserved the life of this youth, you have to a great extent assisted in the overthrow of Russian twaddle."

They both were as noisy as though the street was empty. Makarov's jubilation seemed pretended. He was sober, but spoke as agitatedly as if he wished to hide, by shouting loudly, his real feeling about meeting Clim. His comrade twisted his neck uneasily, trying to focus his crooked eyes upon Clim. They walked slowly, shoulder to shoulder, not yielding the right of way to any passers-by they met. Answering Makarov's rapid-fire questions with restraint, Clim finally asked about Lidia.

"But can it be that she hasn't written you," Makarov cried, "that she doesn't want to study in the dramatic school, but that she's going to take up some courses? She went home about two weeks ago."

As he spoke he glanced in wonder at Clim.

"She decided that she didn't know how to act."

"That's true, she can't!" said Liutov in his grating voice, and tossed his head so that his cap moved down on his forehead.

"Telepneva is leaving the school also; she's going to marry. This is her fiancé!"

With his forefinger, Liutov pointed to his heart and, touching his chest, turned the finger as if it were a corkscrew. His eyes

were nondescript, of an elusive hue, but very bright. He studied Clim with an unpleasant intensity. One eye hid itself at the bridge of his nose. The other turned up toward the temple. Both of them quivered mockingly when Clim said:

"I congratulate you. A remarkably beautiful girl."

"Enough to darken one's mind," corrected Liutov, pushing his cap to the back of his head.

Makarov suggested breakfast.

"Of course," said Liutov, boisterously seizing Clim's arm. "That's the only thing Moscow lives for — to eat!"

5

A few minutes later they were seated in a sombre but comfortable nook in a little restaurant. Liutov, as if he were saying a prayer, was giving his order to the old man who served as waiter:

"And do thou give us, my father, to go with the vodka, some Westphalian ham, and some Spanish onions, having cut the same into thick slices."

"I understand."

"I doubt it not, but nevertheless I do remind thee of it."

"It's a pleasure to see you!" Makarov said, after lighting a cigarette and smiling at Clim through the smoke. "It's curious, brother, that we didn't write to each other — eh? Well, what are you now — a Marxist?"

The hurried manner in which Makarov asked his questions made Clim vaguely suspicious.

"A Marxist?" Liutov exclaimed. "I respect them!"

Resting his elbows on the table, he began to speak in a hoarse voice that now and then had a squealing quality which reminded Clim of Dronov.

"I respect them, not as representatives of the class to whom

Karl Marx has exhaustively expounded the dynamics of capital and its cultural power, but as Russians whose sincerest wish is: 'may every kind of long-winded humbug perish!' In Marx we have, finally, a leader of a faith and one who is 'ninety proof.' This isn't our Russian mash which arouses a lyrical itching at the soul; it isn't the brew of Prince Kropotkin, Count Tolstoi, Colonel Lavrov [22] and seminary students who've baptized themselves in the religion of Socialism, with all of whom it is undoubtedly pleasant to chatter awhile. No, indeed. It's none of these! With Marx one cannot chatter. Actually, we act as follows: we sample the jaundiced liver of His Excellency Michael Eugraphovich Saltikov,[23] then chase the bitter taste of it down with the darling holy-lamp oil from the factory of His Illustrious Highness of Yasnaya Polyana, and are completely satisfied! Our chief concern is to have something to gab about. As for living — why, that's possible under any and all conditions. Even though you spit us on a stake, we still live on."

Liutov spoke fluently, without hesitation. Although his words expressed bitter and ironical thoughts, Clim could find no malice in them. This impressed him. But it was even more amazing that the man who talked thus was completely sober. Looking at him closely Clim reflected:

"I couldn't have been mistaken; he was drunk five minutes ago."

He felt that there was something insincere about Liutov. The colour of his twisted eyes was somewhat dirty looking; not turbid, but dirty — exactly that. They seemed to be dusted through and through with a darkish dust. But in his pupils crafty little sparks, which aroused apprehension, occasionally flared up.

"The eyes are the brain turned inside out," Clim remembered what somebody had once said.

Liutov's yellow hair was combed *à la capulet,* a style so unsuit-

able to his long face that he must have done it deliberately to make himself look eccentric. His face should have had a square beard, but Liutov had shaved his cheeks and wore a small pointed Van Dyke. Above his Van Dyke his thick, negroid lips protruded, the upper one slightly covered with a thin moustache. His hands were red, and as thickly sinewy as his neck; blueish veins stood out on his temples. It seemed, too, that his careless manner of dressing was premeditated. Under the worn, unbuttoned jacket of very expensive broadcloth, he wore a silk blouse. He was probably about twenty-seven, or perhaps thirty at the most, and did not look at all like a student. Makarov, who had become provokingly good-looking, had apparently chosen this man as a crony out of spite, and in order to emphasize his own personality. But why had Alena, the beauty, chosen him?

Swallowing one glass after another of vodka that was so cold that it made the teeth ache dully, biting off thick slices of onion laid on thin slices of ham, Liutov was asking:

"The rejected literature — that is to say, the *Apocrypha* — do you respect it?"

"It's a great heresy," Makarov said smiling good-naturedly and looking at Liutov amiably.

"Have you read *The Confession of Adam?*"

Lifting up the hand with a knife held in it, he declaimed:

"'And the devil spake unto Adam: Mine is the earth, but God's are the heavens; if thou wouldst be mine, create thou the earth! And Adam spake: Whosoever's the earth be, his shall be my offspring also.'[24] That's it! There's the formulation of our *mouzhik*-like, inner materialism!"

Through his attempts to simplify what was incomprehensible, Clim Samghin convinced himself after an hour that Liutov was in reality a rather shady and shifty man, and that he was unsuccessfully playing the part of a Merry Andrew. Everything

about him was artificial; in everything was revealed the assumed. This was especially exposed by his fantastic mode of speech, permeated with Slavinisms, Latin citations, the malicious verses of Heine; adorned by that coarse humour which the actors of provincial theatres flaunt when telling anecdotes during *divertissements*.

Again Liutov seemed to be drunk; his face had grown red. He held out a goblet of champagne to Clim, shouting:

"Wish me not good trading in either down or feathers! Let's drink to the health of a magnificently beautiful maiden, Alena Markovna!"

His voice rang with rapture. Clinking glasses with Liutov, Makarov said sternly:

"Well, now, you've had enough to drink."

Liutov, draining the wine at one gulp, winked at Clim.

"He's educating me. I deserve it, inasmuch as I am quite often in my cups, and indulge in vain talk, to the mortification of my flesh. Hades do I fear, and all this here"—he outlined a semicircle in the air with his hand—"and the state the other side of the grave. Out of a Judaean fear do I make friends with persons of a spiritual calling. Eh, colleague, but I'll show you a certain deacon . . ."

Closing his eyes, Liutov shook his head, then pulled from a pocket of his trousers a steel key-chain, at the end of which dangled a heavy gold watch.

"Ugh, time for me to be going! Kostiya, tell 'em to chalk it up."

He extended his hand to Samghin:

"Glad to have made your acquaintance. I've heard a great deal of good about you. Don't forget: Liutov, in the down and feathers business!"

"Don't show off," Makarov advised him, as the skew-eyed

fellow pumped Samghin's hand and talked on with a little smile on his penny-woodcut face:

"D'you know, there are certain girls with little bits of defects; nobody would remark a little defect like that, but the girl herself forewarns them: 'Look — my little nose hasn't turned out altogether nicely; but then, everything else . . .'"

He gently dropped Clim's hand, started out, caught his foot against the leg of a chair, and, shaking his fist at it, backed out of the door.

"What a — strange fellow," Clim said. Makarov thoughtfully agreed:

"Yes, he is rather odd."

"I can't understand Alena — Whatever made her? . . ."

Makarov shrugged his shoulders. Hastily, as though justifying himself, he said:

"No — What of it? Her beauty demands a worthy fame. Volodka is rich. He's interesting. He's kind to the verge of being amusing. He has completed his course as a jurist; now he's taking up the historical-philological course. However, he doesn't study. He's in love, upset by it and turned generally topsy-turvy."

6

Makarov lit a cigarette, allowed the match to burn to the end and threw the cigarette on his plate. It was evident that he had become intoxicated; perspiration stood out on his temples. Clim said that he wanted to have a look at Moscow.

"Let's ride to the Sparrow Hills," Makarov eagerly suggested.

They walked out of the restaurant and took a cab. Contemplating the cabby's round-shouldered back, tightly drawn over with a blue, long overcoat, Makarov said:

"Moscow muddles one's brain somewhat. I'm enchanted, be-

witched by it, and feel that I have grown silly here. Don't you find it so? You're being amiable."

He removed his cap; a strand of hair had become stuck to his temple and it alone was immovable, while all his other locks stirred and stood straight up. Clim sighed: Makarov was very good-looking. It was he who should have been marrying Telepneva. How stupid everything was. Through the deafening noise of the street, Clim heard him say:

"The people here are fantastically talented. Probably such people lived during the Renaissance. I can't understand which are the saints and which the cheats. There's a mixture of both in almost everybody, and there's a multitude of those who play the innocent. But why? The devil only knows. You must grasp this."

Clim glanced suspiciously out of the corner of his eye at his comrade's face:

"Why should I, especially?"

"You're a philosopher; you face everything calmly."

"How ingenuous he is," Clim reflected. "You have a good face," he said, comparing Makarov with Turoboev, who looked at everybody through the eyes of a lieutenant holding all civilians in contempt. "And you're a good lad, too, but it looks as though you would drink yourself to death."

"Probably," agreed Makarov calmly, as though they were speaking of someone else. But after that he became silent, apparently deep in thought.

On the Sparrow Hills they entered a deserted inn. A stout waiter escorted them to the terrace, where a workman was daubing the window frames with white paint. Then the waiter served them with tea, and in a rapid patter ordered the glazier:

"Don't be dashing around hindering the gentlemen from enjoying the beautiful view!"

" Isn't it rural? " Makarov finally asked, gazing into the misty distance, at the town that was like a golden carpet richly embroidered with topaz spots that were the church cupolas.

" Yes, this is beauty," he softly said. Samghin nodded his head, but immediately remarked:

" A conditional concept."

Without replying Makarov moved aside his goblet, in which a ray of sun shone side by side with a slice of lemon floating in the brownish liquid. He leaned an elbow on the table, thrusting his fingers into his thick, streaked locks.

Moscow did not stir any rapture in Clim Samghin. To him the city was like a monstrous porous gingerbread cake, gayly powdered with opaline dust. When beauty was discussed, Clim preferred to preserve a discreet silence, though he had long before noticed that it was spoken of more and more. As a topic of conversation beauty was becoming as commonplace as the weather and health. He was indifferent to the generally acknowledged beauties of nature, finding that the sunsets were just as monotonous as the mackerel-sky of frosty nights. But, while feeling no response to this kind of beauty, he knew that this was his own shortcoming. Lately, wordy panegyrics on the beauties of nature had even begun to irritate him, and had made him wonder why he felt this way. Was it Lidia, with her hatred for nature, who had inspired him with this apathy?

He had been quite confused by Turoboev when the latter, teasing Elizaveta Spivak and Kutuzov, had asked, smiling:

" But what if all this beauty you brag about should suddenly turn out to be merely the peacock tail of reason, as silly a bird as the peacock itself? "

Clim had been struck by the impudence of those words. They were still more definitely impressed on his memory when Turoboev, keeping the ball of the dispute rolling, had said:

"The more vivid, the more handsome the bird, the more stupid it is; but the more homely a dog, the more intelligent. This can also be said of people: Pushkin resembled an ape; Tolstoi and Dostoevsky were by no means Adonises. In general, all men of intelligence are ugly physically."

Makarov's lyrical silence irritated Clim. He asked:

"Do you remember Pushkin?

Moscow! How fearful to a Russian is thy dismal aspect."

Makarov glanced at him with sober eyes and made no answer. This was not to Clim's liking. It struck him as being impolite. Sipping his tea he began in a tone which demanded attention:

"When people talk of beauty I always feel as though I were being somewhat taken in."

Makarov yanked his fingers out of his hair, took his elbows off the table, and asked in wonder:

"What did you say?"

Having repeated the sentence, Clim continued:

"What is there beautiful in a mass of water, fruitlessly flowing for a distance of three score *versts* from a lake into the sea? But it is acknowledged that the Neva is beautiful, whereas I see her as merely tedious. This gives me the right to think that she is called beautiful only to conceal her monotony."

Makarov quickly drank the cooled tea and, having puckered up his eyes, started looking at Clim's face.

"The same desire to hide from our own selves the niggardliness of nature do I perceive in the landscapes of Levitan, in the lyrical little birches of Nesterov, in the vividly-blue shadows on snow. Snow has the glaze of the casing of the casket in which virgins are buried; it hurts one's eyes, it blinds; there are no blue shadows in nature. All this is invented for the sake of self-deception, in order that we may live more comfortably."

Seeing that Makarov was listening attentively to him, Clim talked for ten minutes. He recalled Nekhaeva's sombre complaints nor did he forget to repeat Turoboev's apothegm about the peacock tails of reason. He could have said a great deal more, but Makarov uttered:

"It's interesting to see how much of what you have said coincides with Lidia's ideas." Rubbing his forehead, he asked: "Well, what is it you would say. . ." He broke off and smiled. "I don't know what to ask you . . . it's all so strange . . ."

He suddenly flared up, even his ears becoming suffused with blood. His eyes wrathfully sparkling, Makarov began expressing his philosophy in a low voice:

"These matters don't touch me; I look at them from another side, and I see that nature is a senseless, evil sow! Recently I was dissecting the cadaver of a woman who had died in childbirth — my dear fellow, if you only knew how she was all torn up, how she was maimed! Just think of it: fish spawns its roe; a hen lays its egg without any pain — but a woman must give birth in diabolical torment. Why?"

Designating the organs in Latin terms, outlining them with his fingers in the air, Makarov rapidly and angrily pictured for Clim something so repulsive that Samghin requested him:

"Stop!"

But, becoming ever more indignant, Makarov talked on, tapping his finger on the table:

"No! Stop and think about it. Why is this? Eh?"

Clim found his friend's indignation naïve, boring, and he felt a desire to repay Makarov for the accusation that he had taken Lidia's ideas. With a scornful smile, he said:

"Well, then, you just go ahead and take up gynaecology. You'll be a ladies' physician. You have a fine appearance for that."

Makarov, taken aback, glanced at him uncomprehendingly and after a silence he said with a sigh:

"You've a queer way of jesting."

"You seem to be philosophizing about women still, instead of kissing them."

"That smacks of a phrase from a barrack song," Makarov said quietly. He passed his hands vigorously across his face, and shook his head. A wondering, confused expression had come into his eyes; he seemed somehow to have dozed off for a moment, then come to, awakened by a jolt, and he seemed now to feel very much ashamed of himself for his lapse.

"He's sobering up," Clim Samghin thought, and wanted suddenly to pay his comrade off for that remark about the barrack song.

In this he was helped by two flies which descended to the ridge of a teaspoon and joined in the sex act. One of them vanished in the air immediately; the other flew away two or three seconds afterwards.

"Did you see that? That's all there is to it!" Clim said.

"No!" Makarov answered harshly. "I don't believe you," he continued in a protesting voice, glancing from under his contracted eyebrows. "You can't believe that. In my opinion, pessimism is the same as cynicism."

Having drunk his cooled tea, he continued in a lower voice:

"I must be something of a poet, or perhaps I'm simply a fool, but I can't . . . I respect women and — do you know? — at times I think that I'm afraid of them. Wait a minute — don't sneer like that. First of all, I feel respect — even for those who sell themselves, and I can't get over a feeling of aloofness. It isn't the fear of infection, or squeamishness either. I've thought a great deal about this . . ."

"But you express yourself poorly," answered Clim.

"Yes?"

"You don't speak clearly."

"Sometime you'll understand!"

Makarov, shaking his head again, glanced at the vari-coloured sky, clenched the fingers of both hands hard into a single fist, and smote his knee.

"It was Lidia who inspired me with this feeling—do you know that?"

"So that's where you got it?" Clim said vaguely, and put himself on guard.

"Lidia and I are friends," continued Makarov and his eyes smiled gratefully. "We're not in love with each other but have always been very close to each other. I was in love with her once, but that's all burned out. It's an awfully good thing that it was she with whom I fell in love, and it's a good thing that it's past."

He began laughing; his face became joyously radiant.

"Am I maundering?" he asked through his laughter. "It's only in words, but in my soul everything is clear. You understand: she held me back somewhere on the very brink. . . But, of course, it isn't her holding me back which is important, but that she is!"

Samghin reflected, not without pride:

"I'd never permit myself to speak so intimately with anyone I didn't know well. And why does he say: 'She held me back'?"

"To love her as women usually are loved is impossible," said Makarov sternly. Clim smiled:

"But why?"

"Don't laugh. I feel it. It's impossible. In her, Brother, we have an amazing personality!"

He reflected, with his eyes shut.

"In the Bible she had read: 'And I will put enmity between thee and the woman.'[25] She believes in that and dreads enmity

and falsehood. That is, I think she dreads these things. You know, Liutov once said to her: 'Why should you be mumming in theatres, when by nature the path of your soul leads to a nunnery?' She's on as friendly terms with him as with me."

Clim listened closely, yet could not understand; and, besides, he did not have much faith in Makarov. Nekhaeva had philosophized, too, before taking the course she felt she must follow. Such, also, must be the case with Lidia. He put but little faith in what Makarov had said about his attitude toward women, about his friendship with Lidia.

"This, too, is a peacock's tail. And it's clear that he loves Lidia."

Samghin began to pay less attention to Makarov's disconnected and vague speech. The city was becoming more vivid, more magnificent; the belfry of the Cathedral of Ivan the Great soared to the sky, like a finger adorned with a rosy nail. A soft din floated in the air; the bells of the churches chanted in different voices, announcing the evening service. Clim took out his watch and glanced at it:

"It's time for me to be going to the depot. Come along, will you?"

"Of course."

"At the beginning of our talk you made an excellent remark about men and women inventing themselves. Possibly this is as it should be, because by this means the bitter thought about the aimlessness of life is sweetened a trifle . . ."

Makarov looked at him in wonder and got up:

"How strange that you — you — say this! I did not think anything of the sort even when I had decided to kill myself. . . "

"In those days you weren't normal," Clim reminded him calmly. "The thought of the aimlessness of being is ever more persistently alarming men and women."

"Do you find life so difficult?" Makarov asked quietly and amiably.

Clim decided that it would be more significant if he would say neither yes nor no, and let the remark pass in silence, with his lips pursed up.

7

They started off slowly a-foot. Clim felt that Makarov was looking at him askance, with sad eyes. His fingers tucking in his disobedient locks under his cap, he was talking softly:

"After the examinations I'll be back in the province. I've some tutoring there. I'm going to tutor Radeëv's adopted son — Radeëv, the steamship owner, do you know him? And Liutov is coming too."

"Is that so? And where is Luba?"

"She's a school-teacher in a country school."

Out of a cloud of shining dust a bearded cabby emerged; the two friends took their seats in the carriage and in a few moments were rolling through a city street, hugging the kerb. Clim scrutinized the people; there were more stout persons here than in Peterburg — and the stout ones, despite their beards, bore a great resemblance to country wives.

"Probably not one of them is disturbed by any thoughts about the purpose of life," he reflected half contemptuously, and recalled Nekhaeva.

"No, after all, she's a dear. She's even an extraordinary girl. How would Lidia regard her?"

Makarov kept silent. They drove up to the depot; Makarov remembered something and began to hurry; he embraced Clim and left:

"We'll see each other again soon!"

Following him with his eyes Clim made his way into the buffet; he sat down at a table in a corner. There was more than an hour to wait before the departure of his train. He did not want to think about Makarov. In the last analysis Makarov seemed to be a man, never very intelligent, who had faded into complete insignificance. Clim felt this about all of his acquaintances — that they were fading, that they were losing whatever colourfulness they had once possessed. He accepted this as a sign of his own spiritual growth. This impression was prompted and fortified by the hastiness with which all of them strove to adorn themselves with the peacock-feathers of Nietzsche and Marx. It vexed Clim to recall that Turoboev also perceived this hastiness, and that he knew how to poke fun at it. Yes, this fellow was never in a hurry to get anywhere, nor was he fading. When he spoke, it was with lifted eye-brows — which seemed to be embroidered — and with his eyes glittering:

"I acknowledge, as completely legitimate, the endeavor of every bachelor to capture for himself as spouse this or that little idea and so to live to the end of his days, in perfect harmony with it — but personally, I prefer to remain a bachelor."

Clim envied Turoboev's mode of talking, almost to the verge of hating him. Turoboev styled ideas "maidens of the spiritual estate"; he affirmed that "humanitarian ideas demand considerably more faith than churchly ones, inasmuch as humanism is spoiled religion." Samghin felt aggrieved — why couldn't he expound the books he read as lightly as this?

It seemed that Turoboev looked at him too attentively; that he was forever studying him in silence, catching him in contradictions. On one occasion he remarked negligently, as he looked brazenly into Clim's face:

"Samghin, there are only two answers to all questions: yes

and no. It appears that you would like to invent a third? That's the wish of the majority of people; but to this day no one has yet succeeded in realizing that wish."

It was insulting to hear these words, and unpleasant to realize that Turoboev was not stupid.

The ringing of a little bell, and the call of the stationmaster, announcing the time of the train's departure, interrupted Samghin's thoughts about a man who was unpleasant to him. He looked about him; passengers were bustling in the waiting room, jostling one another, rushing toward the exit to the platform. Clim got up, and asked himself with a shrug of his shoulders:

" Well, what need have I of Turoboev or Kutuzov? "

X

I

THE sunlight sifted through the tulle of the window curtains, and thus softened, filled the parlour with the perfumed warmth of a spring noonday. The windows were open, but the fragile curtains did not stir and the leaves of the flowers on the window sills were motionless. Clim Samghin felt pleasantly used to this quiet again. It made him, in some sort of a new way, listen closely to his mother's words.

"You've grown very, very manly," Vera Petrovna said, apparently for the third time. "Even your eyes have become darker."

She had met her son with a joy which he had not expected. Clim, from childhood, had grown accustomed to her dry restraint; he had become used to responding to his mother's dryness with a respectful apathy, but now it was necessary to find some other tone.

"Well, and what of Dmitri?" she asked. "Is he studying the labour question? Oh, my God! Well, I always thought he would concern himself with something of the sort. Timophei Stepanovich is convinced that interest in this question is being stimulated artificially. There are certain people to whom it seems that Germany, fearing the growth of our industries, is importing a workers' socialism into our country. What does Dmitri say about his father? During these eight months — no, more! — Ivan Akimovich hasn't written me."

She was dressed in holiday attire, as though she were expecting guests, or was herself preparing to go visiting. Her lavender dress, tightly enveloping her bust and body, bestowed on her figure something tense and challenging. She smoked a cigarette — this was something new. When she said: "My God, how rapidly the time flies!" Clim caught a complaint in the tone of her words. This was not natural to her either.

"You know, during Lent I was obliged to take a trip to Saratov, in the matter of Uncle Jacob," she went on. "It was a very hard trip; I know no one there, and I fell captive to the local . . . radicals. They made things difficult for me. I didn't succeed in accomplishing anything — they didn't even let me see Jacob Akimovich. I confess — I didn't insist on it very strenuously. What could I have said to him?"

Clim inclined his head in agreement:

"Yes — it's difficult to get along with him."

His mother's discourse somewhat confused him, but he took advantage of it, and asked her where Lidia was.

"She went away to a convent with Alena Telepneva whose aunt is a Mother Superior. A good thing, that. But she should realize that, in general, she has no talents of any sort. Then she could cease regarding herself as something exceptional and perhaps learn . . . to respect people."

Vera Petrovna sighed, glancing at her watch, listening to something.

"Have you heard that Telepneva has found a rich bridegroom?"

"I saw him in Moscow."

"Yes? What is he?"

"Some sort of a clown," said Clim, shrugging his shoulders.

"I think Timophei Stepanovich has come."

Clim's mother got up and went to the door, but it flew wide open, impelled by Varavka's mighty hand.

"Aha, my jurist — you've arrived? How are you? Well, now, let's have a look at you!"

He immediately filled the room with the creaking of new shoes, the crackling of chairs being moved; while in the street a horse began to snort, gamins began to shout, and a resounding tenor soared upward.

"Vera — tea, please. The session is at half-past eight. Listen to this: The city has decided to give you a subsidy for the school."

But she no longer was in the room. Varavka looked at the door, and, stroking his beard with his hand, ponderously wedged himself into a chair.

"Well now, my jurist, how goes it? To judge by your face the sciences have not nurtured you badly. Tell me about it!"

But, having glanced with his little bear-like eyes into Clim's he slapped his knee and began telling him:

"I want to publish a paper — what? A newspaper, Brother. We shall try to replace kitchen gossip with organized public opinion."

Several minutes later, having rolled his round carcass over into the dining-room, he rapidly stirred the tea in his glass with a small spoon as he shouted:

"What is the significance of the social revolution to us Russians? It's simply the process of replacing the immemorial pants with seemly breeches."

It appeared to Clim that his mother was looking after Varavka with a martyr-like submissiveness, as though she felt a grievance which she could not or would not completely conceal. After half an hour of being noisy, after drinking three glasses of tea, Varavka vanished, as an episodic character in a play

vanishes from the stage of the theatre after livening up the piece.

"He puts in an amazing lot of work," Clim's mother sighed. "I practically do not see him. People dislike him as they do all cultural workers."

Vera Petrovna discoursed for a long time about the boorish ignorance and dull malice of the merchant class, about the near-sightedness of the judgments of the intelligentsia. It was dull to listen to her, and it seemed that she was striving to deafen her own self by loud speech. After Varavka's departure it became quiet again, both in the house and the street. Only the dry voice of Clim's mother sounded, monotonously rising and falling. Clim was glad when she said in fatigue:

"You must be tired."

"I'd like to take a walk; but what about you — would you care to?"

"No," she said, smoothing her hair with her fingers, and trying to hide the grey hairs at her temples.

2

It was dark when Clim came out into the street. The wooden walls and the fences of the houses still breathed the day's warmth. To the left the moon was rising, painting cool shadows of trees across the grey cobbles of the pavements. The window panes of the houses seemed smeared with a yellow grease of fire; the few stars visible were like tiny drops of a greasy perspiration. The houses were squeezed flat against the ground, imperceptibly melting over the street in shadows. From house to house, in dark streams, flowed the fences. In the city park, people were walking slowly on the path around the pond; over the glassy circle of the black water their low voices floated lazily. Clim recalled the

books of Rodenbach. He thought of Nekhaeva; this was exactly where she should be living, in this quiet, among these slow-moving people.

He sat down on a bench, under the overhanging, thick shelter of a bush. The alley made a sharp turn to the right; beyond its turn two men were sitting. One was growling dully; the other was scraping either a cane or the sole of his boot over the as yet untrampled, crunching gravel. Clim listened to the monotonous crooning, and heard expressed again thoughts long familiar to him:

"He, like Tolstoi, seeks faith, and not truth. To think freely about the truth is possible only when the universe is laid waste. Take from it everything—all things, all phenomena, and all your desires, save one: to fathom thought in its substance. They both think about man, about God, about good and evil, whereas all this is but a point of departure in searchings after eternal, all-resolving truth. . . ."

"Have you, by chance, a whole rouble?" came Dronov's rather sour voice.

Clim Samghin rose, deciding to leave unseen by them, but he noticed by the movements of the shadows that Dronov and Tomilin had also gotten up, that they were going in his direction. He sat down and leaned over, hiding his face.

"I haven't a whole rouble," Tomilin said, in the same tone he had used in speaking of eternal truth.

Without raising his head, Clim followed them with his eyes. On Dronov's feet were rather old boots, down at the heels; on his head was a worn cap. Tomilin wore a long black overcoat which reached to his heels, and a hat with a broad brim. Clim smiled, thinking to himself that this costume emphasized very characteristically the queer figure of the provincial sage. Feeling himself sufficiently sated by Tomilin's phi-

losophy, he did not experience any desire to visit him, and with displeasure reflected about the inevitable meeting with Dronov.

It became quieter in the garden, and lighter. The people had vanished. A greenish thread-like line of moonlight was reflected in the black water of the pond, filling the garden with a faint drowsy light. A man in a yellow suit approached and sat down beside Clim, sighing heavily. Taking off his straw hat, he wiped his forehead with his palm, then glanced at Clim, and asked irritably:

"D'you play billiards, Student?"

At Clim's short "No" the man rose and walked away rapidly, swinging his hat; but when he was some fifteen paces away he turned and called back loudly:

"You good-for-nothing, there's green in your eye!"

Then he broke into diabolical laughter, and vanished. Clim wanted to laugh too; he sat, vacant of thought, for some time and then went home.

3

On the fourth day, Lidia appeared.

"Oh, you've come!" she said, raising her eyebrows in wonder. Her amazement, her hesitatingly extended hand, and her rapid glance which glided over Clim's face, all repelled him and made him draw away from her with a frown. She had filled out, but her eyes, surrounded by shadows, had become deeper, and her face wore the expression of a sick person. She had on a grey dress, caught up with a belt; and a straw hat tied with a white veil — an outfit such as is seen on English ladies travelling through Egypt. She greeted Vera Petrovna negligently. For five minutes she complained capriciously about the boredom of the convent, about the dust and mud of the road, and then went off

to change her dress. Everything she said strengthened Clim's unpleasant impression.

"What do you think about her now?" Clim's mother asked, looking into a mirror and adjusting her hair.

"She's already acting a little; that's the influence of the school," Clim answered.

Alena came for the evening tea. She listened to Samghin's compliments with the ease of a full-grown woman well versed in all the combinations of flattering words. Her lazy eyes looked at Clim's face with a slight smile of mockery.

"What polite forms of address he uses to me!" she cried out. "That's worth something. So you've seen my fiancé? He's killing, isn't he?" Snapping her fingers she added, as if she were tasting something palatable:

"A clever fellow! Squint-eyed; jealous. He's so amusing! Really, he's a riot!"

"And he's rich."

"That's best of all, of course!"

Licking a quick smile off her magnificent lips, she asked:

"Do you think it's terrible of me to feel that way?"

She affected a sing-song speech; expansive, but soft and assured, with expressive gestures — that freedom of motion which in the business world is styled 'ease of manners.' With every turn of her body she cleverly and proudly emphasized the vanquishing power of its beauty. Clim saw that his mother was admiring Alena, with sadness in her eyes.

"My friends reproach me — 'there, now, the girl was tempted by money,'" Telepneva was saying, taking bon-bons from a box with small tongs. "Lidia is especially venomously wounding. According to her tenets one must live with the heart's chosen, and even if one lives in a lean-to of branches. But I play ordinary and light rôles; for me a decent little house and my own horses are a

necessity. I'm informed: 'You, Telepneva, are perfectly devoid of an understanding of dramatics.' This wasn't told me by just anybody at all, but by a playwright. Well, to live with the chosen of one's heart without a drama is impossible, as is attested in both poetry and prose."

"The school has spoiled this girl more than it has Lidia," Clim reflected.

His mother, after one cup of tea, went away unnoticed. Lidia listened to the succulent voice of her friend, smiling with a barely perceptible smile on her thin lips — lips probably very ardent, Clim reflected. Alena humorously told about the dramatic affair of a high-school girl who had fallen in love with a book-binder — an intellectual.

"A real intellectual — in eyeglasses, with a little beard. His breeches bag at the knees; he glorified Nadson's tart little verses — Oh yes! There, Lidochka, d'you see how dreadful it would be — to have an intellectual, and a lean-to of branches? Now my Liutov is one of the old order; just a little merchant, adoring Pushkin. That's old sectarianism, too, to be reading Pushkin. For now all the fashion is this — what d'you call him? — Vitebski, Vilenski?"

With rosy fingers, the nails of which glinted like mother of pearl, she picked a bon-bon, and, nibbling it daintily, showed off the whiteness of her teeth. Her voice sounded good-natured; her eyes had a kindly glint.

"Liutov and I don't like threatening verses:

Believe: Baal will arise once again,
And devour the ideal. . . .

"Well, let him eat and be hearty."

She suddenly flared up and almost jumped from her chair.

"Oh, Lidusha! What verses I received today from Moscow! By

a new poet, Brusov, Brosov. They're amazing! They're somewhat — immodest. But what music, what music! "

She hastily rummaged in the pleats of her skirt, searching for the pocket; she found it and took out a crumpled envelope.

" There! "

The plump little Luba Somov ran noisily into the dining-room. Behind her, as though he were fording a stream over slippery stones, cautiously walked a tall youth in blue trousers, a blouse of unbleached linen, and queer sandals on his stockingless feet.

" My dear girls, this is swinishness! " Luba shouted. " You come back and say nothing about it, and you know that I can't live without you."

" Nor without me," put in the oddly dressed youth in a muffled voice.

" And without thee, my visitation from God; and without thee, yes! Let me introduce you girls: Inokov, the child of my soul, a vagabond; he's going to be a writer."

Having had her fill of kissing her friends, Luba sat down beside Clim, wiping her sweating face with the end of a kerchief, her merry glance resting on Samghin.

" What a little toy you've become! "

She immediately moved over to Lidia, saying:

" Well I was put out from among the school marms — How do you like that? "

Inokov sat down heavily in the chair she had left. Moving it a bit away from Clim, he smoothed his long reddish hair with his fingers, and silently fixed his blue eyes on Alena.

Clim had not seen Luba Somov for more than three years. During that time she had changed from a listless, awkward adolescent into a ginghamed young woman of the village. Her hair, bleached at the temples by the sun, was tied with a white

kerchief. Her cheeks had rounded out; her eyes had a lively glitter. She spoke loudly, sprinkling her speech generously with the simple words of the common people, smiling, her cheeks rosy. There was something vulgar about her, at which Clim inwardly made a wry face. Inokov was like a Simple-Simon shepherd of the hamlet. In him, too, nothing remained of the *gymnasium* lad as Clim remembered him. Between the high cheek bones of his freckled face, a blunt nose nestled, its broad nostrils nervously distended. On his upper lip a rather sparse, Tartar moustache was sprouting feebly. The glance of his blue eyes frequently and incongruously changed. First it would be excessively soft, like a woman's; then unjustifiably severe. His bulging forehead was already furrowed with wrinkles.

"May one smoke shag here?" he asked Clim in a very low voice. Samghin suggested that he go near the window, opening on the garden, and went with him. There, taking from his pocket a pouch and paper, Inokov rolled a cigarette for himself, lit it, waved the match in the air to extinguish it, and said with a sigh:

"There's a wench for you!"

"Who do you mean?"

Inokov indicated Alena with his eyes.

"That one. Like a dream!"

Restraining a smile, Clim asked:

"What do you do?"

Inokov shrugged his shoulder.

"Nothing in particular — work. In the fall I fish in the Caspian Sea. Interesting. I also correspond for the newspapers. Occasionally."

"Do they print the stuff?"

"Not much. I don't write often enough, it seems."

When Inokov stood up there was something wedgelike about

him; his shoulders were broad, but his hips were narrow and his legs thin.

"I'm thinking of taking up the fishery business seriously—ichthyology."

The girls were making a great deal of noise at the table, but Luba heard Inokov's words despite the noise:

"You're going to write!" she called out.

Inokov threw his unfinished cigarette out of the window, blew the biting smoke from his mouth, went to the table, and said:

"One should write like Flaubert, or not write at all. In our country they don't write, but merely weave bast-sandals for the soul."

He seized the back of a heavy chair with both hands, began speaking with great heat, strongly emphasizing his *o*'s:

"We have more fish in Russia than there are in any other country in Europe. Yet our fishing industry is barbarous. We trade in fish like birds of prey and like pot-hunters. A certain professor, Grimm, an ichthyologist, came to Astrakhan. I accompanied him through the fisheries. Well, he's blind—intentionally blind."

"But then, is herring necessary to the people?" Luba shouted, wiping her fat cheeks with her unpleasantly yellowish little handkerchief.

Alena laughed heartily, and eyed Inokov askance. Lidia looked at him with narrowed eyes, as one scrutinizes what is far off and difficult to see. But Inokov, thumping the heavy chair on the floor in time with his words, kept on persistently, in utter self-oblivion:

"The Aral Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Sea of Azov and Black Seas, and the northern ones, and the rivers. . . ."

"Let 'em all dry up!" Luba became furious. "I can't bear hearing of them!"

Lidia got up and invited everybody upstairs to her room. Clim

lingered for a minute at the mirror, inspecting a little pimple on his lip. His mother came in from the dining-room. Having very aptly compared Inokov and Somov with those amateurs of the dramatic art who are going through an unsuccessful light piece, she placed her hand on Clim's shoulder and asked:

"How do you find Alena?"

"She's dazzling."

"And she isn't stupid, even though she's mischievous, in a rather coarse way."

Stroking his shoulder, she said quietly:

"There's a fiancée for you — eh?"

"But, mamma! — She is an idol!" her son answered, smiling. "One must have tens of thousands a year in order to adorn it worthily."

"That's so!" his mother thoughtfully agreed, and sighed:

"You're right."

4

Clim went off to Lidia's room. There, the girls were sitting on the divan, as they had done so often in their childhood. The divan had faded a great deal; its springs creaked with senility, but it had stayed just as wide and soft as it had ever been. The small Luba had clambered up on the divan, feet and all. When Clim approached, she made room for him beside her; but Clim sat down on a chair.

"He's still the same sort — a bystander," Luba said to her friends, pushing the chair with her foot, which was clad in a clumsy shoe. Alena suggested that Clim tell them about Peterburg.

"Yes, do! What sort of people live there?" Inokov muttered, sitting on the bolster of the divan, with one of Varavka's thick cigars in his teeth.

Clim began telling them leisurely, carefully choosing his words, about the museums, the theatres, the literary evenings, and the celebrities who took part; but he soon noticed with annoyance that he was talking uninterestingly and that they were not listening to him attentively.

"The people there are no better and no cleverer than anywhere else," he continued. "One rarely meets a person for whom the basic questions of existence are love and death."

Lidia adjusted a strand of hair which had fallen over her ear and cheek. Inokov removed the cigar from his mouth, shook the ashes off into the palm of his left hand, and, clenching it into a fist, remarked reproachfully:

"It's Liev Tolstoi who teaches all this."

"Less so than the others."

"Are there also others?"

"Don't you take this sort of thing seriously?"

Inokov thrust his left hand into his pocket, and wiped the ashes off there.

"I don't know."

Clim felt irritably that this lad was in his way, was hindering him from getting the girls' attention. "He's probably a propagandist, and he must be stupid," he thought.

He began using more provocative words, but tried to make them sound soft and convincing. After he had told them about Maeterlinck, about *The Blind,* about *The Weaver of Fogs,* by Rodenbach, glancing at Inokov now and then, he began talking sternly about politics:

"Our fathers spend too much time in efforts to solve questions of a material character, completely ignoring the riddles of spiritual life. Politics is a province of self-assurance, which deadens the more profound emotions of men. A politician is a limited man; he considers the alarums of the spirit as something like a skin

disease. All these Narodniki, these Marxists, are artisans; and life demands artists and creators."

Inokov, holding his cigar up like a candle, pierced the blue spirals of its smoke with a finger of his left hand.

"Now there have appeared people of a different structure of thought; they open up to us the mysterious unlimitability of our inner life; they enrich the world of emotion and imagination. Elevating man above the hideous reality, they make the reality even more insignificant, even less horrible than it seems when one stands on the same level with it."

"One won't live long in the air," said Inokov softly, thrusting the cigar into the soil of a flower pot.

Clim became silent. It seemed to him that he had given voice to something that was not true — something even unfamiliar to him. He mistrusted any chance thoughts which at rare intervals came to him purely from his own mind, without any connection with a particular person or book. Whatever came from other people, coinciding with his basic mood and easily adaptable to his memory, seemed to him more trustworthy than these stray thoughts that suddenly rose in him. There was something dangerous about them; they somehow threatened to tear him away and distract his reserve of already firmly assimilated opinions. Clim Samghin vaguely guessed that this fear of unexpected thoughts was contradictory to something else in him, yet this contradiction was not distinct, and was swallowed up by his realization of the necessity of self-defense against a current of opinions inimical to his whole nature.

Somewhat disturbed, he looked at his auditors. Their attentive faces calmed him, and Lidia's intent glance especially flattered him. Thoughtfully pleating and unpleating the tip of her braided hair, Luba Somov said:

"Dronov philosophizes too — the unhappy fellow!"

"Yes, he's pitiful," Inokov concurred, nodding his curly head. "But in the *gymnasium,* he was a lively urchin. I'm trying to persuade him to go off to the village as a teacher."

Luba became indignant:

"But what sort of a teacher is he! He's malignant! I don't know him very well, but I don't like him."

Inokov swaggered over to the window. From there he said:

"When they drove me out of the *gymnasium* I thought that it was through Dronov's good offices — that he had told on me. I even asked him the other day: 'Was it you that told on me?' 'No,' says he. 'Well, good enough; if it wasn't you, then it wasn't. I only asked out of curiosity.'"

Inokov smiled as he talked, though the smile did not fit his words. When he smiled the skin over his high cheek bones wrinkled into tiny creases; his freckles moved closer together, and his whole face became darker.

"Of course he's stupid!" Clim decided.

"Yes, Dronov is malicious," Lidia said thoughtfully. "But he is being malicious automatically, as if malice were his trade and he had become tired of it."

"You're a clever little girl, Lidusha," Telepneva said.

"She's a girl with a tang," Luba concurred, embracing Lidia.

"Listen!" Inokov turned to her. "This cigar smells like dung. May I smoke some shag? I'll blow the smoke out of the window."

Clim suddenly got up, walked up to him, and asked:

"Don't you remember me?"

"No," Inokov answered, without glancing at him, as he lit his cigarette.

"We studied together," persisted Clim.

Exhaling a long stream of smoke from his mouth, Inokov shook his head.

"I don't remember you. Were we in different classes, or something?"

"Yes," said Clim, walking away again. "Why do I bother with these people?" he asked himself.

Lidia had gone from the room; Luba and Alena were arguing noisily on the divan.

"It isn't true that every woman is created for the purpose of bearing children," Alena was shouting, offended. "The most hideous and the most beautiful must not do it."

Luba retorted through her laughter:

"You little fool! Would you have me sent off to a nunnery or to hard labour while you are being prayed to like a god?"

Clim paced about the room, reflectively. How quickly and unrecognizably everybody had changed! But he was still the same sort — "a bystander," Luba had said.

"One should be proud of it," he reminded himself. But nevertheless he felt sad.

Tanya Kulikova, quiet and flat as a shadow, entered with a lighted lamp in her hand.

"Shut the window, or else a grey dirt will settle over everything," she said. Then, listening a moment to the argument of the girls on the divan, and looking narrowly at Inokov's broad back, she said:

"You ought to go into the garden if you must smoke that stuff!"

Nobody answered her. She thumped a finger against the milky white lampshade and listened, with her head inclined to one side, to the ringing of the glass; then quietly she left the room, and for some reason Clim's sadness became more profound.

5

He went into the garden where the gathering dusk spread blue shadows over the clusters of white lilac. The moon had not yet risen; a multitude of stars glowed dimly in the sky. The blended perfume of flowers rose from the bushes. Satiny leaves touched his neck and cheeks like cool fingers. Clim walked along the path, the sand crunching beneath his feet. The hum of talk, coming to him through the window, interfered with his thoughts; but he did not really want to think of anything. The heavy odour of the flowers was intoxicating, and Clim felt that, as he circled the garden path, he was succeeding in getting away from himself. Suddenly Lidia appeared and started to walk along beside him, wrapping herself closely into her shawl.

"You talked well — as though it weren't you."

"Thanks," he answered ironically.

"I received a letter from Makarov today. He writes that you have changed very much, and that he liked you."

"Really? That's flattering."

"Don't be like that, Clim. Why shouldn't you be glad if you are liked? I know that you love to be liked."

"I haven't noticed that trait in myself."

"Why are you in a bad humour? Why did you go away?"

"Why did you?"

"They wearied me. But still, it's awkward. Let's go back."

Lidia took his arm, speaking thoughtfully:

"I was sure I knew you, but today you seem to be a stranger to me."

Clim Samghin guardedly and thankfully squeezed her hand, feeling that he became himself again in her presence.

They were shouting irritably in the room. Alena, standing near

the piano, was shooing away Luba Somov, who, jumping about like a hen, kept proclaiming:

" Shamelessness! Cynicism! "

Inokov, smiling confusedly, was talking with broad emphasis on his *o*'s:

" To tell the truth, I shall always prefer cynicism to hypocrisy. However, you're spoiling a lot of first-class water-closet poetry."

" But Alena, one mustn't. . . ."

" One can! " Telepneva cried out, stamping her foot. " I'll prove it to you. Lidia, listen — I'm going to read the verses. Clim, you listen too — however, you — Well, it's all the same."

Her face was flaming; her lazy eyes had an angry glitter; her nostrils were dilated. But Clim found something absurd and amusing about her indignation. When she snatched a small sheet of paper from her pocket and waved it militantly, Samghin involuntarily smiled. This gesture too was childishly amusing.

" I remember even without this," she declared, growing calmer, and painstakingly put the sheet of paper away. " Listen, now! "

Closing her eyes, she stood silent for several moments, drawing herself up, and when she slowly lifted her thick eyelashes it seemed to Clim that the girl had suddenly grown a head taller. In a low voice, in a single breath, she said:

Shadows voluptuous on a couch tenebrous, falling encircle, lurking beckon . . .

She stood with head and eyebrows uplifted, looking wide-eyed at the blue darkness beyond the window. Her hands hung beside her body, their rosy palms open, a little away from her hips.

I watch in the shimmer the sculptured knees glimmer, the white marble of hips and the shadings of hair.

Nekhaeva had often whispered to him such unhealthy, sensuous verses, and they always awoke in Clim fully defined emotions. But Alena did not awaken such emotions; she declaimed naïvely, quoting the words of another, as though describing someone's dream. In Clim's memory rose the image of a girl who, a long, long time ago, had slyly read the verses of Phet, which were so dear to her. But now there was not even slyness sounding in the voluptuous phrases; only naïve wonder in her rich, beautiful voice. Her face had grown pale, perhaps from shame or fear. Her voice dropped lower and lower, weighed down with the delirious words. As she went on slowly and weakly, as if she were deciphering with difficulty what was not clear, Alena suddenly came to a line which she recited loudly, sighing with relief:

Oh distant morning on the sea-marge's foaming; strange, scarlet tints of the timorous dawn. . . .

It seemed difficult for her to quote the poet's words, as if he, standing invisible beside her, unheard by the others, prompted her as she spoke the highly spiced words.

Leaning against the wall, Clim made no effort to understand the words, but listened only to the rhythmical ebb and flow of her voice. Lidia sat swaying slowly back and forth in a chair, staring at Alena.

"'. . . chaos!'" Alena brought out the last word of the poem and sank down on the tabouret near the piano, covering her face with her hands.

"It's outrageously splendid," Inokov muttered.

Luba Somov approached her friend quietly and stroked her head, sighing:

"You don't have to marry; you're an actress!"

"No, Luba, no!"

Inokov began to hurry away glumly:

"Luba, it's time we were going!"

"And I, too," Alena said, getting up.

She walked up to Lidia and kissed her silently. Then she asked Inokov:

"Well, what do you think?"

"You win; it's outrageously splendid!" he answered, strenuously shaking her hand.

6

They went away. The moon shone through the open window. Lidia moved her chair to the window and sat down, resting her elbows on the window sill. Clim stood beside her. Against the blue gloom the girl's profile was etched. Her dark eyes shone.

"She talks glibly of love," Lidia said, "but I think that she only has day-dreams about it, and doesn't actually know. Makarov, too, talks festally about love, and also somehow misses the mark. It's Lutov who really knows. He's an amazingly interesting fellow, but he's the sort of chap who's been burnt, who fears something. Sometimes I feel sorry for him."

She talked without looking at Clim, quietly, and as though checking up on her thoughts. She straightened up, throwing her hands behind her head; her sharp breasts raised high the thin stuff of her blouse. Clim kept an expectant silence.

"How strange it all is! Do you know, in the school I was courted persistently, much more than she; and yet beside her I look almost like a monster. And I felt very much hurt — not for myself, but for her beauty. One — a strange chap, Diomidov — said that Alena was repulsively beautiful. Yes, that's exactly what he said. But he's an unusual fellow; it's pleasant to listen to him, but difficult to believe him."

Before Samghin had a chance to say that he did not understand what she meant, Lidia asked:

"But did you notice that in declaiming she looked just like a fish — the way she holds out her hands as if they were fins?"

Clim agreed:

"Yes, her pose is wooden."

"They couldn't break her of this habit in school. Do you think I'm maligning her? That I'm envious? No, Clim, it isn't that," she continued with a sigh. "I think there is a kind of beauty which does not arouse lascivious thoughts. Is there?"

"Of course," Clim said. "You talk curiously. Why do you think beauty necessarily arouses that feeling?"

"Don't contradict me. I know what I'm talking about. If I were beautiful I would arouse such feelings, too."

She said this with a quick decisiveness, and immediately asked:

"What did you say was the name of that author of *The Blind?* Maeterlinck? Get me that book. How extraordinary that you should begin discussing the most important things in the world today — of all days!"

Her voice had a kindly ring; it was soft, and reminded Clim of half-forgotten days when she, a little girl grown tired of playing, would suggest to him: "Let's go and sit awhile."

"These questions disturb me," she said, looking at the sky. "Last Christmas, Dronov led me off to see Tomilin. He's the rage now. They invite him into the homes of the intelligentsia to preach. But it seems to me he transforms everything in the world into words. I was at his place again another time, by myself. He threw me into his ocean of cold words as one might throw a kitten into a river, and that's all there was to it."

Although she said this without complaining, mockingly, even, still Clim felt touched. He suddenly wanted to stroke her hand and talk honestly with her.

"Talk to me," she begged.

He began telling her about Turoboev, thinking, "But what if I were to tell her about Nekhaeva?"

When she had listened to his ironic speech for about a minute, Lidia said:

"That's not interesting."

But almost immediately she asked, indifferently:

"Is he seriously ill?"

"I don't know," Clim answered, wondering. "Why do you ask? That is — what makes you think he is?"

"I heard that he had consumption."

"He doesn't look as though he had."

Becoming silent, Lidia wiped her lips and cheeks with a handkerchief, then said, sighing:

"At school we had a comrade of Turoboev's, a perfectly unbearable boor, but exceptionally talented. And suddenly . . ."

With a nervous shudder she jumped to her feet, walked to the divan and wrapped herself in a shawl. Standing there, she continued in an indignant whisper:

"Just think how dreadful it is — at twenty years of age to become sick from a woman. It's vile! It's an abomination! Love — and then this!"

She moved away from Clim and almost fell onto the divan.

"Well, what sort of love is that?" Samghin muttered. Lidia angrily cut him short:

"Oh, drop that! You don't understand. There must be, in love, no diseases nor pains — nothing filthy!"

Rocking her bowed body, she spoke through her teeth:

"And everything in general is beastly! You don't know. This winter my father was infatuated with a musical comedy actress, a plump little thing, red and common as a peddler. I'm not on very good terms with Vera Petrovna; we don't like each other. But — Oh Lord! How badly she felt! Her eyes became insane

with jealousy. Have you seen how grey she has grown? How coarse and frightful all this is! People trample one another. I want to live, Clim, but I don't know how! "

She uttered her last words so harshly that Clim was confused. But she demanded:

" Well, tell me: How should one live? "

" Fall in love," he answered her quietly. " You'll come to love, and everything will be clear."

" Do you know that? Have you experienced it? No! And it won't be clear. It won't! I know that it is necessary to love, but I feel certain that I won't succeed in that."

" Why not? "

Lidia kept silent, biting her lips, with her elbows resting on her knees. Her swarthy face had grown darker from a rush of blood. She shut her eyes as if she had been blinded. Clim wanted very much to say something consoling to her, but he was not given the time.

" There I was in the dramatic school, in order not to live at home, and because I have no love for studies, microscopes, and all that sort of thing," Lidia said thoughtfully in a low voice. " I have a certain friend with a microscope. She has as much faith in it as a crone would have in receiving the communion of the Holy Ghost. But through a microscope one can see neither God nor the Devil."

" Why, one couldn't see them with even a telescope," Clim jested timidly, and reproached himself for his timidity.

Lidia, drawing her legs beneath her, sat down on the corner of the divan.

" It seems to me," Clim began resolutely, " that people who give a free reign to their imaginations lead easier lives. Yes, I am convinced of it. Even Aristotle said that the concept is more truthful than the reality."

"No," retorted Lidia firmly. "That's not so."

"But then, isn't poetry a concept?"

"No," answered the girl even more sharply. "I don't know how to argue, but I know that it's not true. I'm not a concept."

And, touching Clim's elbow with her hand, she begged him:

"Don't talk, as Tomilin does, in maxims."

This embarrassed Clim so much that he moved away from her confusedly, saying:

"As you like!"

For a minute or two they were both silent. Then Lidia softly reminded him:

"It's getting late."

7

As he undressed in his room, Clim felt a keen dissatisfaction. Why had he been struck with timidity? It was not the first time now that he had noticed that, alone with Lidia, he felt himself subdued; after every meeting this feeling seemed to grow stronger.

"I'm no schoolboy, enamoured of her — no Makarov," he reflected. "I can see her shortcomings easily, yet her good qualities actually are not clear to me," he tried to convince himself. "She talked foolishly about beauty. And usually she talks affectedly, expressing thoughts which are not her own; she talks unnaturally for a girl of her years."

Trying to understand what attracted him to this girl, he not only could feel in himself no infatuation, but not even a physical curiosity, such as had been aroused by Marguerita's business-like caresses, and Nekhaeva's passion. But he was all the more powerfully drawn to Lidia, and in his longing he vaguely suspected danger for himself. Sometimes it seemed to him that Lidia regarded him with the same self-opinionatedness which had been

hers in childhood, when all girls, except Lidia, had seemed to him inferior beings. Recalling that in this rather slender, sinuous friend of his there had always dwelt a striving to command, Clim stopped at the conjecture that now this striving had monstrously grown, had become weightier; and by its force Lidia was overcoming him. This striving was not in what Lidia said; it lurked behind her words and imperiously demanded that Clim Samghin become another person, that he think and speak otherwise than he did; it demanded an unusual frankness. Lidia lectured:

"You speak too didactically, and your attitude toward people is that of a bureaucrat on a special mission. Why do you smile so strainedly?"

All this aroused in Clim a feeling of protest, a consciousness of the necessity for self-defense, and this consciousness, reminding him of Makarov, dictated to him:

"I'll cease paying any attention to her, and that's all there is to it. For I really don't want anything from her."

He attempted to hold himself aloof, tried to convince Lidia that he regarded her with indifference; but he kept appearing before her in the effort to make her notice his independence. Occasionally she would ask negligently:

"What are you sulking about?"

Then she would irresistibly ask him a provocative question:

"Why do you like *Our Heart?* That's unnatural; such a book should not be to a man's liking."

It was not always easy to answer her questions. Clim felt that behind them was concealed a desire to catch him in contradictions; and something else besides was also hidden in the depths of her dark pupils, in her clinging, intent gaze.

Once, unable to restrain himself, he said angrily:

"You're examining me as though I were an urchin."

"Really?" Amazement was in her voice.

And, glancing into his eyes with an enigmatic smile, she said gently:

"No, one would not call you a youth, you are so . . ." Groping for a word to finish with, she ended weakly: "Peculiar."

And, as was her custom, she began to question him:

"What do you find in Rodenbach? In my view, his words are only the lather of poor soap."

8

One evening, when an autumnal rain was noisily lashing the windows, when Clim's room was lit fitfully by a blue flame of lightning, and the trembling window panes creaked and rattled under the crashing blows of the thunder, Clim, in a lyric mood, kissed the girl's hand. She took this gesture calmly, as though she had not even noticed it. But when Clim tried to kiss her hand again she quietly moved it away from him.

"You don't believe me, but I—" Clim started; but she interrupted him.

"Don't try to imitate the Chevalier de Grieux. You're no more like him than I'm like Manon!"

A moment later, with a shudder, she said:

"I think that actors make love most repulsively of all."

Clim asked, upset:

"But why actors, exactly?"

She made no reply.

When she expressed ideas thus unexpectedly, without any connection with foregoing ones, Clim always felt in them something suspicious, something insinuating. Did she, perhaps, consider him an actor? He failed to realize that Lidia, no matter what she talked about, was thinking of love as Makarov thought about the destiny of women, as Kutuzov thought about socialism, as Nek-

haeva seemingly had thought about death, until such time as she had succeeded in importuning love. Clim Samghin more and more disliked and feared people. He was possessed by a single idea: they were all rapacious, they were all infected with the yearning to enslave.

Often it seemed to him that Lidia was playing with him, and this intensified his feeling of unfriendliness toward her; intensified his timidity, too. But, with wonder, he noted that even this did not repel him from the girl.

He felt himself worst of all when she would suddenly, in the middle of a conversation, sink into strange far-away day-dreams. With her lips tightly shut, her eyes wide open, she would gaze fixedly at one point, and apparently through it. On her swarthy face would appear the shadow of unknown thoughts. At such minutes she seemed older, more penetrating and dangerously wise. Clim would let his head sink, unable to bear her gaze, expecting that she would at any moment invent something unusual and abnormal, and demand that he carry out her whim. He feared that he would not be able to refuse her. Only once did he summon sufficient courage to ask her:

"What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing," she answered — a meaningless word which she used habitually.

But then, having forced herself to lighten her face with a smile, she said:

"A *Molchun* has me in his clutches. Paula — Do you remember her? The chambermaid who stole all our stuff and vanished without a trace? — She told me about this strange being — *Molchun,* the Silent One. I understand him; I almost see him, like a cloud or a fog. He'll embrace you; he'll penetrate a person and empty him. He is a sort of little chill. Everything disappears in him — all ideas, words, memory, reason — everything, until there

is only a single thing left in one: fear of one's self. Do you understand? "

"Yes," Clim answered, watching her assumed smile fading, and reflected: "This is acting. Of course it's acting! "

"But I don't understand," she continued with a belittling glance, "neither about myself or about people in general. I don't understand. And I don't seem to know how to think. Or else I think about my own thoughts. In Moscow I was introduced to a certain sectarian, a kind of simpleton, with a face like a small dog's. He rocked himself and muttered:

My legs sings 'Whither am I going?'
My hand sings 'Wherefore am I taking?'
But my flesh sings 'Why am I living?'

"Strange, isn't it? Such a simple fellow, and so thin. No need of that, in my opinion."

Clim concurred:

"There is no need."

But Lidia suddenly asked him very sternly:

"But what if there be need of it? How do you know whether there is or not? "

She constantly did that: she would compel one to agree with her, and would immediately start to dispute her own statement. Clim readily agreed with her, but did not want to argue with her, knowing it to be fruitless. She never listened to rebuttals.

9

He also saw that his conversations with Lidia were not to his mother's liking. Varavka frowned too, chewed his beard with vexation, and said that birds build their nests only after they have

learned to fly. One felt that he was full of boredom, fatigue and ferocity. He would come home all rumpled up as if he had been in a brawl. Wedging his ponderous body into the leather armchair, he would drink seltzer water with cognac, and upbraid the city government, the county government and the governor:

"Russia is inhabited by two tribes: the people of one tribe are able to think and speak only about the past; the people of the other, only about the future, and, inevitably, the very distant future. The present and tomorrow interests almost nobody."

Clim's mother sat opposite Varavka, as though posing for a portrait painter. Lidia had formerly been very amiable with her father, but now she talked negligently with him and treated him casually, as if she would not take the trouble even to dislike him. An oppressive boredom frequently compelled Clim to leave the house. As he was leaving one afternoon he saw in the street a drunken citizen buying hens' eggs from a stout, one-eyed country woman. As the man took them out of the little basket, he held each egg up to the light before he thrust it into his pocket, muttering in Tartar:

"Yakshi. Chokh yakshi."

He had dropped one egg and was trampling on it; under the sole of his dirty boot a potential omelette was obliterated. Before the hotel swung a sign with its end broken off and some of the letters missing, so that it read "The Moscow Hou——." Pigeons were perched on it, peeping into a little window behind which stood a black-moustached fellow without a jacket. He whistled, frowning in concern as he inspected and stretched his blue suspenders. A little crone with a kind face was pushing a small perambulator in which pink, toylike arms stirred, catching at the air. Having bumped Clim with a wheel of the pram, she cried out angrily:

"Can't you see? What good are your glasses?"

She halted to take a pinch of snuff, and discoursed long and loudly on godless students. Clim walked on, pondering over the sectarian who had said:

My leg sings "Whither am I going?"

The drunken burgher; the stern crone; the black-moustached fellow who was interested in his suspenders — What sense was there in the existence of these people?

In a narrow blind alley between rotted fences some twenty urchins were noisily playing at skittles. On one side, lying with his belly to the ground, was Inokov, bare-footed and capless. His rumpled hair shone like silk in the sun; his mottled face was wrinkled up with a happy smile. He was shouting in an imploring tone, all excited:

"Petya — don't hurry. Take it easy! Try to get at him! At him — Oh, you missed!"

Clim often casually encountered Inokov. He would be walking somewhere, taking wide steps, gazing at the ground, his hands clenched behind his back, as though he were bearing on his shoulders an unbelievable weight. Or he would be sitting on a bench in the city park, his mouth open, observing, as if he were bewitched, the children at play.

From the basement of the store of the merchants Sinev, thousands of worms had crawled to the street. They were squirming, crawling over the grey foundation stone, covering it with a living black lace. They crawled over the sidewalk, under the feet of the throng of people; the people retreated before them, some timidly, some squeamishly. The first group grumbled ominously; the second waxed malicious.

"They don't mean no good. This here don't bode no good."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" Inokov shouted and laughed, exposing his uneven teeth, and explained:

"Something has rotted."

People drew away from him as they had moved away from the worms; he was so lanky and thin.

Once Clim met him face to face in the street and wanted to greet him, but Inokov passed by biting his lip, his eyes bulging out like a blind man's.

10

Two or three times Inokov, accompanied by Luba Somov, dropped in to see Lidia, and Clim perceived that this wedge-shaped lad felt himself an uninvited guest at Lidia's. Senselessly, like a perch falling into a daze in a vat of water, he would slink from corner to corner, tossing his long-haired head, his mottled face wrinkled up. His eyes scrutinized the things in the room with a questioning stare. It was evident that Lidia did not please him and that she was under consideration. He would suddenly approach her, and raising his eyebrows, opening his eyes wide, would ask:

"Do you like Turgenev?"

"I read him occasionally."

"What do you mean by 'I read him occasionally'? Have you read him?"

"Very well, then — I have read him," Lidia said, smiling, and Inokov reminded her instructively:

"The Bible, Pushkin and Shakespeare are read, and Turgenev is read through completely, in order to fulfil a polite duty to Russian literature."

After that he would begin saying foolish and impudent things:

"Turgenev is a candy-maker. His things aren't art, but pastry. Real art isn't sweet; it always has a bitter tang to it."

He said this and went away. Another time, walking up behind Lidia unexpectedly, and bending over her shoulder, he asked:

"Have you read *The Wearisome Story,* by Chekhov? Amusing, eh? The professor all his life had been teaching something or other, but toward the end he surmised: 'There is no common idea.' What chain had he been fastened with all his life then? What, without a common idea, did he teach people, then?"

"But isn't a common idea a platitude?" Lidia asked. Inokov, after a wondering glance at her, muttered:

"So that's how? Y-yes. I hadn't thought of that. I don't know."

And he continued:

"Chekhov, now, hasn't got this same common idea either. One discovers in him a feeling of mistrust toward man and the people. Leskov, now, believed in man, but none too much in the people. He said: 'Slavic rubbish, our native manure.' But he, Leskov, saw through all of Russia. Chekhov is to a very great extent under obligation to him."

"I can't see that," said Lidia, scrutinizing Inokov with curiosity.

"Well, you just read one after the other; you'll see."

He touched the girl's shoulder with his finger. She drew away from him.

"But listen," he went on, "where's this beauty, this friend of yours?"

"Probably at home. Do you have to see her?" Lidia was smiling.

Inokov's mouth widened, like a child's, in a smile; a soft laughter shone in his eyes.

"Did I ask in a funny way? Well, it doesn't matter! Of course, I don't have to see her, but I'm curious about her. How will she live? With so much beauty it will be a hard matter. And, I'm forever thinking, that some Lola Montez or other is bound to appear in our land during the reign of the new Czar."

"He's fallen in love with her, that's what," Luba Somov said,

looking at her friend amiably. "This fellow of mine is rather a greedy one when it comes to bright things."

"That's nonsense," he protested. "I don't even know how to fall in love. But this girl drives me into deep thoughts. She's out of place here! It makes me sad to think about it."

"Try not to," Lidia advised him.

Inokov was amazed; his brows went up:

"Why, is it possible to see and not to think?"

When he and Luba had gone away, Clim asked Lidia:

"Why do you speak to him in the tone of an old patrician lady?"

Lidia laughed very softly and explained, with her hands crossed on her breast, and shrugging her shoulders:

"I, too, think it's incongruous, but I can't find another tone. It seems to me that if I were to speak to him any other way he would seat me on his knees, embrace me, and fall to questioning me: 'What are you?'"

Clim reflected for a while, and said:

"Yes, one may expect all sorts of impertinences from him."

XI

1

ONE evening Luba came alone, tired and frightened. "I'm sleeping with you, Liudusha," she announced. "My darlingest Grishuk went off somewhere into the district; he must needs see how the *mouzhiks* are going to riot. Give me something to drink and I don't mean milk. May I have some wine?"

Clim went to the cellar and brought up a bottle of white wine. The three of them seated themselves on the divan, and Lidia began questioning her friend. "What sort of a man is Inokov?"

"I don't know what to say. The truth is, I don't know him," Luba began, spreading her arms in bewilderment; and Clim, to his own surprise, felt that she was telling the truth,

"I've known him for six years. I've been living with him for almost two years, but I see him rarely, inasmuch as he's forever hopping in all directions away from me. He'll blow in, like a wasp, circle around, buzz a little, and suddenly: 'Luba, tomorrow I am off for Kherson.' *Merci, monsieur! Mais pourquoi?* My dears, it's perfectly dreadful — even shameful — to be speaking French in our village, and yet one feels like doing it! Perhaps one hopes to intensify the absurdity of living in order to remind one's self of other things, of another life."

She had begun jestingly, with comic intonations; but she went on pensively; only now and then a muted desire to be humorous made her speak in a sad attempt at jesting.

"'We must,' says he, 'know Russia.' To know everything—he's dotty about that. He has said this even in verses:

'But I apart these chains shall rend:
To that end he my soul did waken,
For that did he my freedom send,—
This fanatic of knowledge—Satan!'

"Well, and so he's not here now. And there are no letters, and I, apparently, do not exist. Suddenly he'll come clambering through the door, kindly, sheepishly. 'Tell me, where were you? What did you see?' He'll tell me about something not very amazing, yet nevertheless . . ." Tears appeared in Luba's eyes. She took out her handkerchief, wiped her eyes in confusion, and smiled:

"Nerves. Well then: 'In Mariupol,' says he, 'the widow of a merchant married a negro sailor; the negro assumed the orthodox faith in church; he sings tenor in the left wing of the choir.'" Luba sobbed loudly, covering her eyes again with her handkerchief.

"I don't believe in this negro; he invented this negro. But inventing the incredible is another hobby of his. He argues with life just as one would with a capricious wife: 'Ah, then, so that's how you are? Well, I can be even more complicated.' Oh, my children, he frightens me with that! In our settlement we had a desperate madcap, Mikeshko the Bobyl—the Landless One. There was no living with his mischief-making. When Grisha was living there this fellow caught his eye, and Grisha began, every time they met, to make handsprings before him, with his legs up in the air. Everybody laughed: Whatever was he up to? And Mikeshko laughed too. But the wenches and the lads began to tease him: 'You, Bobyl, could never do anything like this

here!' The latter got angry, and wanted to start up a fight with Grisha. But Grisha was stronger; he threw him down on the ground and began to pull his ears, like he would a small boy's, and the Bobyl was close to forty years old. Grisha pulled his ears and said: 'Don't fool around, don't fool around! Anybody can fool around, and better than thou, at that!'" Luba made a wry face, sighed, and continued in a quieter voice:

"To tell you the truth, it wasn't a good thing to see him sitting astride the Bobyl's back. When Grigorii becomes angry, his face is frightful! After that Mikeshko wept. If he'd been simply beaten up, he wouldn't have become so offended; but here he'd had his ears pulled. They laughed him out of town; he went off to work as a hired hand on the Zhadovsky's farm. I'll confess I was glad when he went away; he used to throw all sorts of rubbish into my room through the window — dead mice, moles, living hedgehogs — and I'm dreadfully afraid of hedgehogs!"

Luba shuddered, drank some wine and, licking her lips, said as though recalling something very remote:

"The *mouzhiks* were fond of Grigorii. He told them everything he knew, and he was always ready to help them in their work. He's a good carpenter. He repaired carts. He can do any kind of work."

And, after a dismal silence, she added with a sigh:

"He works cheerfully."

After hearing her story to the end, Clim decided that Inokov really was an abnormal and dangerous fellow. The next day he imparted his conclusion to Lidia, but she said very firmly:

"I like such men!"

"But he doesn't seem to care much for you."

Lidia let his remark pass in silence, with a sidelong glance at him.

2

Two days later Luba came running to them, very excited.

"The governor's ordered Inokov to be sent out of town—he's been insulted by the newspaper report of the lottery which his wife had arranged for the benefit of some sufferers from a fire. Grisha is being hunted; the police came and demanded that I tell them where he is. But I don't know! And they won't believe me."

Sitting on a chair, she clutched her head, and, rocking back and forth in the chair, continued:

"For I can't tell 'em! He went to where the *mouzhiks* are rioting! And I don't even know where that is—I don't know where they're rioting."

Lidia tried to console her, but she sobbed on:

"You don't understand. This little one of mine is blind to himself. He doesn't know himself. He needs to be taken care of; and I've gotten so used to doing it! Lidia, ask your father—No, you'd better not!"

She jumped up from her chair, kissed her friend quickly, and went to the door. Pausing there she said:

"Dronov must have said something about this news item; no one but he knew about it. And they found out much too quickly. It must have been Dronov. Goodbye!"

Clim recalled all this as he sat by the lake in the city park, studying his reflection in the greenish water. Luba had gone away after that. It was now two weeks since she had been seen in the village. Dipping his cane in the water he pierced the reflection of his face, and, having shattered it, watched his head spring up again in the water, as the ripples subsided, saw his shoulders and his gleaming spectacles assume shape there again.

"Why are people like Luba and Inokov necessary? Life is

amazingly tangled and cluttered up," he thought, convincing himself that life would be easier and simpler without even Lidia, who, most probably, seemed enigmatic merely because she was cowardly — more cowardly than Nekhaeva — but who was just as tensely awaiting a convenient occasion in order to give herself up to the will of instinct. One would live more peacefully without Tomilin, without Kutuzov, even without Varavka — in general, without all these sages and conjurers with thoughts and words. There were too many people who tried to fasten on others their own inventions and their own conjectures, who supposed their end in life to be just that. Turoboev had put it aptly:

"Every one of us walks about on this earth with a little bell on his neck, like a Swiss cow."

When thoughts of this kind came to Samghin he felt them to be his very own, his real thoughts, those that distinguished him from all other people. But he also felt that in these thoughts there was something indecisive, undetermined and timid. He did not wish to utter them aloud. He knew how to conceal them even from Lidia.

On the water of the pond, beside the white blotch of his jacket's reflection, there suddenly appeared a dark blue, whereupon a womanish voice asked him aggrievedly:

"What's the matter, Samghin — are you putting on airs?"

Clim gave a start, made a swing with his cane and got up. Dronov was standing there. The band of his crumpled cap had slid down over his forehead, making his ears stand out even more than usual; his furtive eyes glittered from under the brim.

"For I've already asked you to see me. Did Somov tell you?"

"Didn't have the time," Samghin said, shaking Dronov's rough childish hand.

"But you have time to sit beside stagnant waters?"

Blowing his nose and coughing, Dronov spat in the pond.

Clim noticed that his spit fell accurately on a single point, or very near it; this point was the reflection in the water of Clim's white cap. He moved away, gazing closely into Ivan Dronov's face, thinner now than it had been. His red, swollen nose twitched nervously; his eyes shone spitefully. They had become lighter, colder, and no longer shifted about uneasily, as Clim remembered they once had. In an unfamiliar, snuffling voice Dronov jerked out complaints: he was getting along badly; there was no work; for two weeks he had been washing bottles in the basement of a brewery warehouse, and now he had caught cold.

"Got any cigarettes on you?"

"I don't smoke."

"Oh yes, I forgot. And don't you ever intend to smoke?"

"I don't know," Clim answered, shrugging his shoulders.

"Of course you won't."

Dronov sighed, drawing his breath in whistlingly, and fell into a fit of coughing before he went on:

"So you're studying? As for me—well, they got me all steamed up, and then chucked me out. If they hadn't shoved me into the *gymnasium,* I'd be painting signs or icons now, or repairing watches. Working at something light. But now I have to go ahead and live half-baked!"

Clim glanced at his protruding ears and thought:

"Well, you shouldn't have dragged forbidden books into the *gymnasium.*"

He even wanted to say it to Dronov, but the latter, as though he had guessed Clim's thought, said:

"When those heathens chased me out of the *gymnasium* there were only three pupils in the seventh class who read Tolstoian pamphlets, and now . . ."

He gave a despondent gesture with his hands.

"Their brains now are itching all the more. A prophet Isaiah

has turned up hereabouts, a fellow like your dear uncle. He tries to convince folks: 'Children, dear children, be ye heroes; do drive out the Czar!'"

"And what about you? Are you ready to drive him out?"

"I'm not playing at that game. I don't put any trust in either uncles or aunts, Brother."

With a slight sneer on his wry face, Dronov stood for a moment fingering the dark down on his chin, then began again more good-naturedly:

"I pin my faith on Tomilin. That chap doesn't demand anything from me, doesn't push me anywhere. He has contrived in his garret some sort of universal judgment-seat, and is content. He pokes about in his books, in his ideas, and very simply proves that everything in the world is sewn with white thread. He teaches only one thing: unbelief. There you already have disinterestedness — Eh?"

He looked into Clim's eyes and repeated:

"It is disinterestedness, isn't it?"

"Yes."

Dronov took off his cap and slapped it against his knee, continuing in a calmer voice.

"A remarkable man. He lives, and doesn't make any wry faces. Just a few days ago they were burying somebody here, and one of the pall-bearers said humorously: 'For thirty-nine years he lived to make wry faces; he couldn't hold out any more, so he died.' Tomilin can stand a great deal.

'Strong is the Tartar; he won't break to pieces!
He is sinewy, the dog; he won't tear in pieces!'"

The grey clouds rose in the sky above the trees. The water lost its oily sheen. A cool wind sighed, rippling the water of the

pond gently and softly rustling the leaves of the trees; then the air was still again.

"Will he go on like this for long?" Clim worried, studying Dronov out of the corner of his eye.

"He has written a treatise: *Of the Third Instinct.* I don't know what it's all about, but I did get a look at the epigraph: 'I seek not consolations, but merely truth.' He sent off the manuscript to some professor in Moscow, who answered him in green ink on the first page of the manuscript: 'Heresy; won't pass the censors.'"

He laughed loudly and uneasily, stretching the cap in his fingers.

"Of course, he would have passed out from hunger, but the cook's wife saved him. She believes he is a saint. She dresses him in her husband's clothes, gives him food and drink, and even sleeps with him. What do you think of that? 'Naught is given us gratis. Fate demands expiatory sacrifices.' The cook's wife is the philosopher's Fate."

Dronov talked in quick jerks, trying to say as much as possible between his attacks of coughing. It was difficult and tiresome to listen to him. Clim became plunged in thoughts of his own, his eyes fixed on Dronov's tortured cap.

"The Fate of Pisemsky,[26] the littérateur, was also a cook; he wouldn't go out into the street without her. But my Fate, now, still doesn't see me."

Samghin suddenly felt a desire to ask about Marguerita, but he banished it, fearing to encourage Dronov's chattering. He recalled how this lad, making mock of Makarov's torments, had said, condescendingly and cynically:

"He's a freak. What's he afraid of? The first time he might shut his eyes, as if he were taking castor oil—and that's all there is to it."

"Your uncle is roaring about love. . . ."

"He's arrested."

"I know; but he has a passion for fighting."

"You're right there, I must say," Clim thought.

"But Tomilin excludes not only love, but everything else, from his operations. That's not a bad thing, Brother. There's no deception in him. Why don't you ever drop in to see him? He knows that you're here. He praises you. 'There is a man of an independent intellect,' he says."

"Of course I'll drop in," said Clim. "I must make a trip to the country house first, though, to do some work. I'll make the trip tomorrow."

He had no work, and he had not intended to go to the country house; but he did not want to go to Tomilin's. He was being confused more and more by Dronov's familiar tone. Clim felt himself more independent at those times when Dronov angrily reproached him; but now Dronov's loquacity inspired him with the fear that the latter would seek frequent meetings, and interfere with his life generally.

"Don't you need money, Ivan?"

He realized that this question would have to be asked sooner or later.

Dronov rose, looked about him, slowly pulled his cap over his flat head, and sat down again, saying:

"I do need it."

Clim gave him money, which he received in silence. He stretched out his leg in an abrupt movement, thrust the money into the pocket of his wrinkled trousers, and buttoned the only remaining button of his grey jacket, which was out at the elbows.

"I'll have my boots mended."

He spat again into the dark water of the pond, and said:

"Last summer, Brother, before the eyes of the strolling public, the head of the district — a fellow by the name of Mussin-Pushkin — stripped himself to the skin here and went in bathing. And a few days after that, in his country place, he took to shooting grape-shot into a herd returning from the common. The *mouzhiks* bound him and carted him into the city, and here the doctors decided that the head of the district had for some time — for two or three months — been out of his mind. In his insane state he had occupied himself with his routine duties and had sat in judgment of men. Bronsky, also a head of the district, fines the *mouzhiks* half-a-rouble each if they don't take off their caps to his horse when his hostler takes it for a swim."

3

Clim sat with Dronov for two or three minutes longer, then said goodbye and went toward home. At the turn of the path he looked back. Dronov was still sitting on the bench, bent over as if he were getting ready to dive into the dark water of the pond. Clim thrust his cane into the ground in annoyance, and started walking faster.

He was dissatisfied with this meeting, and with himself for his colourless and his futile thoughts and words. He had spoken almost automatically, his real thoughts having been elsewhere. What had Lidia and Alena been whispering about so mysteriously during the last three days, he kept wondering, and why had they left suddenly today for the country house? Telepneva was upset; she had wept — her eyes were red. Lidia, looking after her with concern, had bit her lips angrily.

He walked against the wind, through the main street of the village, already lit by street lamps and store lights. Bits of paper blew about under his feet, reminding him of a letter Lidia and

Alena had been reading in the garden the day before. Suddenly he recalled Alena's exclamation:

"No! What do you think of him? There's a boor for you!"

"Can it be possible that she said this of Liutov?" conjectured Clim. "Perhaps he has more than one affair."

The wind spattered drops of rain on his face—warm drops like Nekhaeva's tears. Clim took a cab and, hidden under the leather top of the carriage, rode along thinking of Lidia: she was becoming for him an obsession and a disease; she was interfering with his life.

Upon his arrival home he had barely taken off his coat when Liutov and Makarov appeared. Makarov, rumpled as usual, was radiant with smiles. He went about inspecting the parlour as if it were a favourite inn which he had not visited for a long time. Liutov, wearing flannels and bright yellow shoes, was indescribably absurd. He had shaved off his Van Dyke, leaving sparse whiskers like a cat's. His face, bare, looked more absurd than ever with its thick-lipped much-too-large mouth. His twisted smile revealed his small, fish-like teeth.

Clim was amazed by the quick carelessness with which Liutov kissed his mother's hand, and the insouciance with which his crooked eyes regarded her figure.

"Is he bashful, or is he impudent?" Clim asked himself, observing Liutov's glance darting quickly over Varavka's dark-scarlet face. He was amazed to see Varavka greet the Muscovite with pleasure, and even with respect.

"My uncle, Radeëv, has told you . . ."

"Of course, of course," Varavka exclaimed, bringing a chair for the guest.

"You're buying the land of a certain Turoboev."

"Exactly."

"Turoboev's title to a tract there is being disputed by my

fiancée's aunt, Alena Sikolovna Telepneva, a friend of your daughter's."

Clim knew that Liutov was imitating the voice of the petty official in *Old Times in Kashir;* he spoke like a pettifogger, snuffling deliberately.

"Of course, it was he whom Alena called a boor."

"... who, I hope, is enjoying good health?" Liutov's assumed drawl went on, with reference to Lidia.

"Perfectly. She went off to the country house today, together with your fiancée."

"Today?" Liutov queried. He gave a distressed whistle, and got up, but immediately sat down again, saying: "Without taking the bad weather into consideration?"

Clim sensed something odd in Liutov's movement, and began looking at him more closely. But Liutov was already changing his tone, talking with Varavka about the land in a calm business-like way.

The artfully pretended surprise with which Clim's mother received Makarov was suspicious; she met in that manner only those who were unpleasant to her, but who were for some reason necessary to her. When Varavka led Liutov off into his study, Clim observed his mother intently. Playing with her lorgnette, smiling charmingly, she sat on the sofa. Makarov was seated on a soft ottoman opposite her.

"Clim tells me that the professors are fond of you."

Makarov smiled:

"It's easier to teach sciences than to learn them."

"Why is she inventing things?" Clim wondered. "I never said anything of the sort."

The chambermaid entered and said to Vera Petrovna:

"The master begs you to come to him."

When his mother had left the room, Makarov asked in wonder:

"Alena went away today? That's strange."

"Why?"

"Why just because it is."

Clim smiled.

"Is it a mystery?"

"No, just nonsense. Don't you feel well, or are you angry?"

"I'm tired."

Clim looked out of the window. Small grey shreds of clouds were scudding across the sky and disappearing behind the roofs and trees.

"Standing with my back to him is impolite," Clim thought indolently, but did not turn around when he asked:

"Did they quarrel?"

Before Makarov could answer, Clim's mother opened the door from the study. She was asking a question in a serious voice.

"Don't you think that simplification is a true sign of a normal mind?"

Liutov, Vera Petrovna and Varavka were standing in the doorway, as though about to enter the room. Liutov, lighting his cigarette which was jammed crookedly into an amber holder, smacked his lips, blinked, and said:

"Of a naïve one, yes — a naïve one."

Makarov approached, snatched the cigarette from Liutov's holder, stuck it in the corner of his own mouth, and began gaily:

"If he has uttered aught fearsome unto ye, don't believe him! That's all done for effect."

Liutov, taking out his watch, tapped its crystal with the cigarette holder as he asked:

"Shall we go, Constantine?" He turned to Varavka. "So you're going to hurry Turoboev up?"

Standing beside the huge Varavka he looked like a child. He

stood with his shoulders drooped, shaking as if from cold. There was something subdued about him.

4

When the unexpected guest had gone, Clim remarked:

"A strange visit."

"A business visit," Varavka corrected him, and immediately began to issue orders:

"Tomorrow morning, ride off to the country house; arrange for a room downstairs for these two and one above for Turoboev. Will you do that? Good! . . ."

Varavka went off to his room, leaping up the stairs two at a time. Clim's mother, following him with her eyes, sighed and made a wry face, saying:

"My God! How this Liutov arouses one's antipathy! Whatever did Alena see in him?"

"Money," said Clim unwillingly, sitting down at the table.

"What a good thing it is that you're not a stern fellow," Clim's mother said after a moment's silence. Clim was silent too, not finding anything to say to her. She began talking in a quiet voice, rapidly, as if she were thinking of something else:

"Makarov has a fearful face. It's so irritating, if one looks at it in profile. But full face, it's the face of another person. I'm not saying that he is two-faced in any way unflattering to him. No, he's unfortunately physically two-faced."

"How is one to take that?" Clim asked out of politeness, shrugging his shoulders. Vera Petrovna answered:

"It's an impression."

She began talking about Turoboev. Clim, without listening to her, reflected:

"She's aging. Inclined to chatter aimlessly."

5

When she left him he felt that he had been overwhelmed, as if by a draught, by a sickly feeling he had never before experienced — a saturation with a bitter smoke which, stifling all thoughts and desires, almost evoked a physical nausea. It was as though in his head and chest there had suddenly sparked — yet would not burn, but slowly smouldered — the human faculties of thinking and speaking and remembering. Then there appeared a nagging revulsion, like an ache, against everything surrounding him: for these walls, for the motley squares of the pictures, for the black window panes chopped through to the darkness, for the table, from which there rose the poisonous odour of steamed tea and charcoal.

Clim obstinately stared at his empty glass, listening to the high squeak of the expiring samovar, and mechanically repeated over and over one word:

"Ennui."

Inactive reason never demanded nor resurrected any other word. In this state of inner muteness Clim Samghin went to his own room, opened the window, and sat down, gazing into the damp darkness of the garden, listening intently to the buzzing of the little two-syllable word. Dimly the thought came to him that perhaps exactly such a state of depression over the senselessness of things had driven the district officials mad. Why had Dronov told him about these heads of districts? Why was he always telling savage anecdotes of some kind or other? Clim did not seek for any answers to his questions.

Gradually the fresh cold air drew him out of his void of self-oblivion. It seemed to him that several hours had passed, but as he was lazily undressing for bed he heard the distant ringing of a church bell and counted eleven strokes.

"Is that all? Strange!"

He lay down to sleep, feeling crushed; and did not waken until the chambermaid knocked on his door and told him he must hurry to catch his train. He quickly jumped out of bed and for several minutes stood with his eyes closed, blinded by the amazingly bright glitter of the morning sun. The wet leaves of the trees beyond the open window were also in a blinding glow, with tiny rainbows shining in the crystal rain drops. The healing perfume of damp earth and flowers filled the room; the freshness of the morning made his skin tingle. Clim Samghin, with a shudder, reflected:

"I was in a preposterous mood yesterday."

But, submitting to a mental examination of himself, he found that a slight shadow of his mood was still left with him.

"An ailment of the growth of the soul," he decided, hurriedly dressing.

6

In the evening he was sitting on a sandy knoll near the edge of a pine and birch grove. Before him, a hundred paces away, the river flowed gently, sparkling colourfully under the sun. A yellowish mill roof, through the twisted branches of the willows, seemed aflame; the fields beyond the river were filled with grain. It was a landscape like a coloured picture in a child's book, and although Clim already knew that this place was famed for its beauty, it entranced him afresh. On the hump of the knoll, which was shaped like the full-dress hat of a justice of the peace, Varavka had built a large two-storey country house. On the hillside sloping down to the river's edge were six other rather motley little houses, ornamented with scroll work in the Russian style. In the one to the extreme right, Alena's guardian lived, a sombre old man, a member of the circuit court. The rest of the country

houses had also been rented by people from the city, but were not yet occupied.

It was very quiet. Only the beetles droned among the tiny leaves of the birches, and the evening breeze, warm and sighing, rustled the needle-shaped pine leaves. More than once Clim had heard in the darkness Alena's soft laughter, but he did not want to go to the girls. Lidia and Alena must have realized that someone had arrived because smoke was coming from the chimneys of Varavka's country house, and servants were bustling past the open windows. Several times Clim went out on the balcony of the house and stood there for a long time, hoping that the girls would notice him and come running. He saw Lidia's thin figure clothed in an orange blouse and a blue skirt. Alena was dressed in red. It was difficult to believe that they had not noticed him.

It would be a good thing to appear suddenly before them and do or say something unusual, something striking; for instance, to soar up in the air, or to walk across, as if it were ground, the narrow but deep river.

"What silly ideas!" Clim reproached himself, and realized that lately such childish thoughts had not infrequently flitted through his mind like swallows. Almost always they were connected with thoughts about Lidia, and always afterward he felt a bit alarmed by a vague premonition of danger.

It was rapidly growing dark. In the blue expanse of sky above the river three stars shone and were mirrored in the dark water like oily drops. Lights appeared at two windows of Alena's house. A few minutes later the girls came from the porch of the house and went down to the river bank. Alena cried out plaintively:

"Lord, I'm bored! I'll never be able to live through it."

"Do come on," said Lidia, with evident vexation.

Clim got up and went quickly toward them.

"You?" Lidia was amazed. "Why so mysteriously? When did you arrive? At five?"

In addition to surprise, Clim caught a happiness in her words. Alena seemed rejoiced too.

"Splendid! You can take us for a row. Only please, Clim, there's no need of sage conversation. I've already heard all your wisdom, from the Ichthiosauri to the Flammarions. My betrothed has told me all about it."

For half an hour Clim rowed against the current. The girls kept silent, listening to the dark water plashing with a brittle sound against the oars. More and more stars adorned the sky. The banks of the river breathed forth a tipsy, perfumed warmth of spring. Alena, sighing, said:

"You and I, Lidok, are righteous virgins, and for that reason Samghin — such a white little angel — is ferrying us across, alive, to Paradise."

"Charon," said Clim quietly.

"What? Charon is grey, with a huge beard, and you'll have to live a long time before you get even a small beard. You interrupted me," she continued capriciously. "I wanted to say something funny, but you — It's amazing to what an extent everybody likes to correct and direct! The entire universe is a sort of reformatory for one Alena Telepneva. Lidia, the livelong day, has been stifling me with the dismal works of Metelkin or Metalkin. My guardian assures me, with perfect seriousness, that *The Duchess of Heroldstein* is not a historical woman, but only invented by Offenbach for the sake of the operetta. My cursed fiancé considers me a notebook wherein he jots down, for preservation, his thoughts."

Lidia began laughing softly. Clim, too, smiled.

"No, seriously," the girl went on, embracing her friend. "He'll

soon have me all scribbled over! But whenever he falls into a lyric mood he talks like a deacon."

Mimicking Liutov's voice, she chanted through her nose:

"'Oh, daughter most comely! Deliver me out of the bonds of silence, for I fain would tell thee words soothing unto the soul.' You see, he is convinced that this is funny — 'for I fain would' and 'thee.'"

Lidia's voice had a thoughtful ring:

"You regard him frivolously; he's shy; his eyes humiliate him."

"Yes? Frivolously?" Alena asked provokingly. "But how would you regard a fiancé who forever talks about nothing but materialism, idealism, and other such horrors of life to you? Clim, have you a fiancée?"

"Not yet."

"Imagine that you already have. What would you talk to her about?"

"About everything, of course," Samghin said, realizing that a moment of responsibility was before him. Keeping his pauses natural and in time with the strokes of his oars, he said cautiously that happiness with a woman was possible only under the conditions of complete sincerity in spiritual communion. But Alena, making a gesture of hopelessness, ironically interrupted his speech.

"I've heard that. Probably even the frogs croak about the same thing."

Clim, unabashed, said:

"But every woman once a month thinks herself obliged to tell a lie, to hide herself."

"Why only once?" asked Alena with the same irony in her voice. But Lidia said huskily:

"That's horribly true."

"What's true?" Alena asked petulantly:

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Samghin?"

"No, I feel sad," Clim replied, looking away from them. "It seems to me that there are . . ." he wanted to say, "girls," but checked himself, "women, who, full of false shame, hold themselves in contempt because nature, in creating them, made a coarse and stupid mistake. And there are girls who are afraid to love because it seems to them that love degrades, that it reduces them to the level of animals."

He spoke guardedly, fearing that Lidia might discover in what he said an echo of Makarov's ideas — ideas which probably were very familiar to her.

"Perhaps some of them for that very reason, are so — impure — in their conduct, because they are in haste to be through with love, because they wish to live through as soon as possible the feminine in their nature — which, according to their evaluation, is animal — and to be human beings at last, liberated from the compulsions of instinct."

"That's amazingly true, Clim," Lidia said quietly but distinctly.

Clim felt that in the silence, over the soundless movement of the dark water, his words sounded impressive.

"Do you know such women? Even one?" softly, and for some reason angrily, Alena asked.

"Do I, or don't I?" Clim asked himself the question. "No, I don't know any. But I'm convinced that there must be such women."

"Of course," Lidia said.

Clim became silent. The girls were silent too. Wrapping themselves in a shawl, they snuggled closely to each other. After a few moments Alena asked:

"Isn't it time to be getting home?"

7

The boat began to rock and noiselessly floated downstream with the current. Clim did not row; he merely steered with the oars. He was content. How easily he had compelled Lidia to reveal herself! Now it was perfectly clear that she was afraid to love, and that this fear was all that made her seem so enigmatic. His timidity with her was explained by the fact that Lidia was infecting him with her own fear. Everything was amazingly simple when one knew how to look at it. As he pondered, Clim heard Alena's angry complaints:

"In spite of everything we couldn't get along without a wise conversation! Oh, these same conversations will drive me to some spot 'where sorrow is not, nor sighing, but where life is'[27] — a galloping consumption."

Alena burst into laughter, rocking and slapping her knees with her palms as she exclaimed again and again:

"Oh Lord!"

Clim considered both her laughter and her gestures coarse.

Lidia slipped her hand overboard and began to rock the boat so violently that her friend was frightened.

"Stop! Are you crazy?"

Lidia tossed some water into Alena's face, stroked her own cheeks with her wet palm, and said:

"Coward!"

One bank of the black path of water was bordered by red-brown hummocks of sand; on the other the motionless branches of the bushes bristled stiffly. Alena pointed to the bank:

"Look, Lidia! The earth's head is bowed down to the water to drink, while its hair is standing on end."

"It's the head of a swine," Lidia said.

When they said goodbye to each other, Lidia squeezed Clim's hand very hard and inquired with unusual eagerness:

"Have you come for the whole summer?"

Alena, gazing at the stars, was thinking:

"Then that means that my betrothed will appear tomorrow?"

She kissed Lidia and went slowly toward her house. Clim, seizing the tops of the young pines, clambered up the steep slope of the knoll. Through the rustling of the pine needles and the crunching of the sand he heard Telepneva's laughter, and the words:

"Turoboev! And how then, my darling, are you going to live between two fires?"

"Yes," Clim reflected, "How?"

He stopped to listen, but could no longer distinguish her words. For a long time, until his eyes began to ache, he stood staring at the river, lying immobile in the darkness with its watery vague reflections of stars.

8

The next morning Liutov and Makarov arrived. Behind them came a wain from the station, solidly piled with suitcases, boxes and various packages and bundles. Clim had scarcely given them tea before an acquaintance of Varavka's arrived — Dr. Lubomudrov, a lanky, bald, clean-shaven man with small yellowish eyes that lurked under the black bushes of his beetling eyebrows. Clim had passed almost the whole day with this doctor, showing him the houses for rent. The doctor looked at everything with the dismal gaze of a man familiarizing himself with a place where he would have to live against his will. As they went from house to house, he bit his lips and muttered:

"So! Well what of it? Ve-ery well."

Finally he said to Clim in a bass voice:

"Well, now — keep this one for me."

Then, adjusting his grey, wrinkled hat on his head, he wavered:

"Or, rather, this one."

Clim was tired out, both by the doctor and by his own corroding curiosity: How had Lidia and Makarov met each other? What were they doing? What were they talking about? These questions had tortured him all day. He immediately resolved to hunt up Lidia; but as he neared his house he heard Liutov's voice:

"No, wait a bit, Kostiya. Let's sit a little while longer."

Liutov was talking nearby, beyond the thick birch grove below the path on which Clim was walking, but he could not be seen; he was probably lying down. Clim could see Makarov's cap. A blue cloud of smoke slowly ascended beneath from it.

"I feel like cursing out somebody, like quarrelling with someone," Liutov's voice, like a clarionet, sounded distinctly. "With you, Kostiya, it's impossible. How could one quarrel with a lyric poet?"

"Well, you just try."

"No, I won't bother."

"They say that Phet has a vile temper. Yet he's a lyric poet."

Clim halted. He had no desire to see either Liutov or Makarov. Yet the path led downward past the birches; walking along it one could not escape being noticed. Clim was tired; he did not want to climb up over the knoll. Besides, it would make no difference; they would hear the sound of his steps, and perhaps think he had been eavesdropping. As Clim stood frowning, he heard Makarov's voice:

"Why do you drink in her presence?"

"In order that she may see. I want to be honest."

"You're a hysteric. You imagine a great deal. If you love, well,

go ahead and love 'without hesitation, without ennui, without any fatal reflection.'"

"To do that you'd have to shake the brains out of my head."

"Then get away from her."

"To do that one must have will power."

Makarov talked for a few minutes in a low voice, and so fast that Clim caught only detached phrases:

"The egoism of sex . . . simulation . . ."

Then Liutov began to speak again, also in a low voice, yet quite distinctly:

"Very mature and very interesting. But you forget that I am a merchant's son. This obligates me to measure and to weigh with all possible exactitude. Alena Markovna also is not devoid of worldly wisdom. She sees the future companion of the first steps of her life as very remotely comparable — perhaps even absurdly incomparable — to Adonis. But she knows, and has taken to heart, the fact that he is the sole heir of the firm 'The Brothers Liutov: Down and Feathers.'"

Makarov's murmured rejoinder interposed for several seconds. Then Liutov continued:

"My friend, you're a pin-head! I'm not buying a picture; I'm prostrating myself before a woman with whom not only my despised body but even my hungry soul thirsts to blend. And so, caressing the beautiful hand of this woman, I say: 'A weapon of weapons.' 'And what is that, now?' asks she. I answer: 'Thus sagely did a certain ancient Greek designate the human hand.' 'But you,' she says, 'ought to say things in your own words — perhaps the result will be more amusing.' Just you think, Kostiya — 'more amusing!' And that's all. I wonder: Can it be that I am created for amusement?"

"Well, that'll do, Vladimir. Go and get some sleep," Makarov said, loudly and irritably. "I've already told you that I can't

understand these — extroverts. But I know one thing: Woman gives birth to man for woman."

"Downright heresy!"

"A matriarchate. . . ."

Liutov expressed his incredulity in a high whistle. When they spoke again the voices of both became indistinct in the distance as they walked away.

9

Clim sighed in relief. A little bug had crawled under his collar and was wandering up and down his back, causing an unbearable itching. Several times he tried, cautiously, so that they would not hear him, to rub his back against the trunk of a birch, but the tree always creaked and swayed, rustling its leaves. As he stood listening he had burst into a sweat of apprehension, imagining that at any moment Makarov would get up, turn around, and discover him eavesdropping.

He had been listening interestedly to Liutov's complaints, even smiling once or twice. It seemed to him that in Makarov's place he would have spoken more cleverly. To Liutov's question: "Am I for amusement?" he would have answered:

"If not, what for, then?"

Above the place where Makarov had been sitting a blue cloud of smoke still hovered. Clim descended toward it. From a little pit of sand, golden and blue tongues of fire darted about consuming the rufous pine needles and small bits of satiny birch bark.

"What childishness," Clim Samghin reflected. He put out the fire with sand, and carefully stamped it down with his foot. As he was approaching the country house, he caught sight of Makarov, who called out to him:

"Where are you going?"

Makarov was lounging picturesquely against a tree, the

inevitable cigarette in his teeth, and some papers in his hands.

" The girls are in a bad humour," he informed Clim. " Alena is afraid she has caught cold, and is being captious. Lidia is in a truculent mood. She's been yelling a-plenty at Liutov because he did not approve the *Diary of Marie Bashkirtzeva.*"

Fearing that Makarov would come with him if he sought out the girls, Samghin decided to visit them later, and went up to his room with Makarov. The latter sat down on a chair and unbuttoned the tight collar of his blouse. He placed the thin notebook he was carrying on the window sill and put an ash tray on it.

" Everybody, Brother, is enormously bored," he said, frowning, running his hand through his hair. " Literature doesn't show that in the past people experienced such a strange ennui. Perhaps this isn't ennui? "

" I don't know," Clim answered disinterestedly. " They say that a certain animation is being noticed. . . ."

" A bookish one," protested Makarov.

Clim let the remark pass in silence. His eyes were intent upon some oddly discoloured flies flitting about in a reddish ray of sunlight. Some of them, as though perceiving in the air an immovable point, quivered above it for a long while, hesitating to settle; then they would fall almost to the floor, and fly up again to this invisible point. Clim shifted his gaze to the little notebook.

" What's that? "

" A project of the program of the Socialist League. It asserts that communality has made our *mouzhik* more receptive to socialism than the peasant of the West. An old story. Liutov is interested in it now."

" Out of boredom? "

Makarov shrugged his shoulders.

"N-no. He has his own attitude toward politics. I don't understand him there."

"But in everything beside this, what is he?"

Elevating his eyebrows, Makarov lit a cigarette. He tossed the burning match toward the ash tray, but it fell into a glass of milk.

"Oh, hell!"

He threw the milk out of the window, and as he glanced after the white stream, said with vexation:

"It fell on the flowers. Have you a piano?"

He evidently had forgotten about Clim's question, or did not want to answer.

"What do you want a piano for? Do you play?" Samghin asked dryly.

"Just imagine — I do play," said Makarov, spreading his fingers. "I started to play by ear, then began taking lessons. This was while I was still in the *gymnasium*. And in Moscow my teacher was trying to talk me into entering the conservatory. Yes. I have a talent for it, says he. I don't believe him. I have no talents at all. But it's difficult to live without music, that's true, Brother!"

"The piano is over there, in that room — my mother's," Clim said. Makarov rose, carelessly put the notebook into his pocket, and went away, rubbing his hands.

10

As soon as the first chords of the music sounded, Clim went out on the terrace. He stood there for a moment looking at the river, bound on one side by the black semicircle of the forest, and on the other by a mountain of dove-grey clouds behind which the sun had already sunk. A soft wind was gently blowing the green-

grey waves of wheat toward the river. He heard the plaintive music of unfamiliar minor chords. He turned suddenly and went off toward Alena Telepneva's house. A bearded *mouzhik* with a wooden leg barred his way:

"Perhaps you'd like to go huntin' for catfish, mister?"

Clim silently waved him away.

"This here little catfish weighs just about sixty pound," the *mouzhik* called after him, coaxingly.

Alena's maid informed Clim that the girl was not feeling well. Lidia, she said, had gone for a stroll. Samghin went down to the river and looked about. Lidia was not to be seen. Makarov's stormy music sounded in the distance. Clim turned homeward and again met the *mouzhik*. The latter stood in the path, holding on to a branch of a small pine tree as he scratched the sand with his wooden leg, trying to draw a circle. Looking up thoughtfully into Clim's face, he made way for him, saying very softly into his ear:

"There's a soldier's wife hereabouts, too — very temptin'!"

As Clim came up to the terrace of the country house, Makarov ceased playing, and Liutov's piercing voice floated out:

"The people have thought of everything, my dear Lidia Timopheëvna — both about the paradise of ignorance, and the hell of knowledge."

There was no light in the room. The twilight blurred the outlines of Liutov's figure. Lidia, in a white dress, sat at the window; and only her black curly hair was visible against the sheer curtain. Clim paused in the doorway behind Liutov's back, listening.

"When Adam, being expelled from Eden, turned around to look at the tree of knowledge he saw that God had already blasted the tree. It had dried up, and thereupon the devil did step close to Adam and did speak: 'Thou rejected offspring, no way hast thou other than the one of earthly torment.' And

he did draw Adam into the earthly hell, and did shew him all the splendour and all the abomination thereof, which same had been wrought by the seed of Adam! On this theme the Magyar Imre Madoch has writ a rather significant piece. There, that's how we must understand things. And yet you, Lidochka. . . ."

"I am not discussing that," Lidia said. "I don't believe— Who's that?"

"I," answered Clim.

"Why do you appear so mysteriously?"

A note of annoyance in her question offended Clim. He walked up to the table and lit the lamp. Makarov came in, dishevelled, squinting at the light. He leaned against Liutov's shoulders, wedging him into the reed chair, and said:

"You can't sleep yourself—Is that why you're putting others to sleep?"

Lidia turned to Clim:

"Why did you light the lamp? The heat lightning was flashing so splendidly."

"That's not heat lightning; it's a storm," Clim corrected. He started to put out the lamp, but Lidia commanded:

"Leave it alone."

Makarov, softly whistling, went out onto the terrace. He paced back and forth outside the window, his figure lit up ever and anon by the flashes of lightning.

Lidia got up from her chair.

"Will you see me home?" she asked, turning to Liutov.

"Be delighted to."

As they came out on the terrace, Makarov announced:

"I'll come along."

But Lidia said:

"No, it's not necessary."

Makarov, clasping his hands back of his head, stood for a moment watching Liutov assist Lidia's progress by holding away from her head the branches of the young pine trees. Then he smiled to Clim:

"Did you hear that? 'It's not necessary.' More than any other words, those express her attitude toward the world and people: 'It's not necessary.'"

Having lit a cigarette, Makarov let the match burn to the end, and, leaning with his shoulder against the jamb of the door, continued in the tone of a physician telling a colleague the history of an interesting disease:

"While conversing with anyone, she's always solicitous lest someone else hear, or know, what the conversation is about. It seems she is afraid that people will begin talking insincerely, in harmony with one another, but, even though contradictions interest her, she herself doesn't like to arouse them. Perhaps she thinks that every man is possessed of a mystery which he is likely to impart only to Miss Lidia Varavka?"

Clim thought that Makarov was speaking to the point, and was indignant: Why was it Makarov, and not himself, who was saying this? And looking at his comrade through his glasses, he reflected that his mother was right: Makarov's face was a double one. If it had not been for his child-like, rather silly eyes, this face would have been like that of a depraved man. Smiling, Clim said:

"Nevertheless, you're in love with her."

"I've already told you I'm not."

Makarov blew on his cigarette so that sparks flew out from its lit end.

"However, she has no self-love. It seems to me that she doesn't know her own full value. She feels that life's a serious business, and not intended for charming diversions. At times it seems that

an enmity to her own self is seething in her, — today the ghost of the self she was yesterday rises up to oppose her."

Makarov fell silent; then began laughing very softly, saying:

"A certain naturalist, a friend of mine, a very talented lad, but an animalistic fellow and an Alphonso [28] — he's living openly with a rich old woman — has put it rather well: 'We've all kept women, maintained by the past.' He came out with it one day when I reproached him. There's something to it — Eh?"

"I can't think it's anything but cynicism," said Samghin.

The storm was approaching. A black cloud had covered everything with impenetrable shadow. The river had all but vanished in the darkness, and only in a single spot did the light from a window in Telepneva's house fall on the turbid water.

Makarov no longer resembled the youth in a bloodied canvas blouse, whom Clim, in horror, had led through the street a long time before. This dissimilarity aroused Clim's curiosity and vexation.

"You've changed, Constantine," Samghin disapprovingly remarked. Makarov, smiling, asked:

"For the better?"

"I don't know."

Makarov nodded his head and smoothed his scattered hair with his hand.

"It seems to me that I've grown calmer. D'you know, I've always had the absurd feeling that I used to go about as if I were constantly hunting a ferocious beast; it wasn't myself I was shooting at that day, but it. And another thing: I've looked around the corner."

After a silence he went on, talking thoughtfully and quietly:

"In childhood I feared nothing: neither darkness, nor thunder, nor fights, nor the glare of conflagrations in the night — we lived in a street where much drinking was going on, and fires were

a frequent occurrence. But as to corners — I was afraid of them even in the daytime. When I used to walk through the streets and had to turn a corner, it always seemed to me that something lay in wait for me there — not a gang of fellows, who could beat me up, never anything actual or tangible, but something more fearsome, legendary. I suppose it was fear of something I didn't know anything about, not unmixed with eagerness to encounter something different from the things I had seen and known all my life. Brother, I knew a lot before I was ten years old — almost everything a boy of that age shouldn't know. It's possible I expected something that was not yet familiar to me; it made no difference whether it were better or worse; only let it be something else."

Looking at Clim with laughing eyes, he sighed deeply:

"But now I look around all corners calmly, because I know that even around the corner which men think the most fearful of all, there's nothing."

"I think the most fearful thing in life is falsehood!" said Clim Samghin dramatically.

"Yes. And stupidity. As I see it, people live very stupidly."

For a little while both were silent.

"I'll go and play a bit more," said Makarov.

Above the table, around the lamp, flitted tiny grey insects. They scorched themselves; they tumbled down on the tablecloth, covering it with ashes. Clim locked the door leading to the terrace, put out the light, and went to bed.

II

Listening to the thunder crashing, Clim fell into aimless thought which lent itself neither to words nor to images. He felt as though he were in an elusive torrent composed of his own

vague thoughts and feelings, the dull roar of the thunder, the drumming of the infrequent, heavy raindrops on the roof, and the song of Grieg which Makarov was playing. After a few scattering heavy drops the cloud passed; the thunder became subdued and more distant; the moon looked through the window brightly. Its light seemed to lend vague motion to all the surrounding objects; the furniture stirred; a wall staggered. A dog on the mill began to bark in fright. Makarov ceased playing; a door slammed; there came the low sound of Liutov's voice. Then everything was quiet, and in the frozen stillness Clim felt still more strongly the push of unformed thought within him.

This was not the boredom he had been feeling recently; it was a vision seen in a dream. He seemed falling into a bottomless pit, rushing past his own usual thoughts to meet some new thought, inimical to the old. His old, accustomed thoughts were somewhere within him, but wordless and powerless, like shades. Clim Samghin dimly felt that he must confess something before himself, but could not tell what it was. And indeed he was afraid to discover it.

The wind was becoming more boisterous, whistling fitfully through the roof-beams in a stifled tone and soughing through the pines. The moonlight burst into the room for a moment, then vanished. Again the world was filled by rustlings and whisperings of the darkness. Still Clim, oblivious to the passage of time, lay awake, staring aimlessly into his nebulous thoughts. The wind rapidly scattered the short spring night; the sky took on the chill greenish hue of morning twilight. Clim wrapped his head up in his blanket, suddenly thinking:

"As a matter of fact, I have no talents."

But this thought did not offend him. It vanished as quickly as it had come to him, and again he sank into the devastating torrent of inarticulate thought and feeling which coursed through him.

XII

1

HE got up early, feeling as if his head were filled with dust. "Why do I fall into such moods? Where do they come from?" he asked himself.

While he was drinking tea, alone, Turoboev and Varavka entered in long grey dust coats. Varavka looked like a barrel, and Turoboev lost none of his strangeness in a wide baggy coat. When he had taken the canvas duster off, he appeared to Clim still more erect and rigid. His cold eyes had sunk deeper within their blue shadows; Clim noticed something gloomy and baleful in their steady stare.

Shaking the dust from his beard, Varavka told Clim that his mother wanted him to return to the city no later than tomorrow evening.

"These musicians are coming to see her — you know them, and so. . . ."

He waved his red hand vaguely. Clim was annoyed.

"Both Varavka and my mother are deliberately driving me away. They want me to be with Lidia as little as possible," he stormed inwardly.

It occurred to him, too, that he was being jostled with suspicious haste, which was natural only on the stage of a theatre, or in a street when some accident had occurred. He had no desire to go to the city. He was stirred by curiosity: How would Lidia meet Turoboev?

Varavka took from his bulging portfolio plans and papers, and began to discuss the hopes that the liberal county-members had placed in the new Czar. Turoboev listened to him with an expressionless face, sipping milk out of a tumbler. In the doorway of the terrace appeared Liutov, red-faced, his hair wet. He blinked his squinting eyes and announced:

"Well, I've taken my dip!"

"R-rather early, sort of risky," said Varavka reproachfully. "Here, allow me to — ah — to introduce you."

Clim observed that Turoboev shook Liutov's hand very indifferently. He immediately shoved his own into his pocket and bent over the table, rolling the bread crumbs into pills. Varavka rapidly moved the dishes away, unrolled his plan and, tapping its green spots with the handle of a teaspoon, began talking about woods, swamps and sands. Clim got up and went out, feeling that a hatred for these people was blazing up in him.

2

He picked out a knoll in the forest from which he could have a good view of all the houses, the birches and the river, the mill and the road, and the small hamlet of Nikonovo, situated a short distance from Varavka's country houses. He sat down on the sand beneath the birches and opened Brunetière's book, *The Symbolists and the Decadents*. But the sun interfered with his reading, and he could not keep his mind on the book because of his curiosity to know what was going on down there below him.

Near the mill a bearded *mouzhik*, small as a toy, wearing a red blouse, was caulking the bottom of a boat. The reverberating strokes of his wooden mallet rang clearly through the silence. A country woman, as toy-like as the man, was driving geese to the river, shooing them along by shaking the front of her skirt at

them. Two urchins with fishing poles on their shoulders were running along the shore; one was dressed in yellow, the other in blue. Makarov appeared, swinging his towel. He walked up to the landing of the baths, let his bare foot hang down into the water, jerked it out, and shook it, as a dog might. Then he lay down with his belly across the plank foot-bridge, washed his head and face, and, rising, walked slowly back to the house. As he went he rubbed his hair with the towel, pulling his head about roughly, as if he had a spite against it and wanted to tear it off.

Warmed by the sun, intoxicated by the heady perfumes of the forest, Clim dozed off. When he opened his eyes Turoboev was standing on the shore of the river with his hat off. He was slowly turning, as if on a pivot, his eyes following Alena Telepneva, who was walking toward the mill. In the distance to the left, on the road to the settlement, Lidia's slender white figure flitted lightly, as if she were floating over the ground.

"Did she see him?" he wondered. "Did they speak to each other?"

He got up to go down to the river, but a feeling of unfriendliness toward all of them restrained him. Turoboev, Liutov, Alena, who was selling herself, Makarov and Lidia, both of whom would not or could not point out Alena's shamelessness to her — toward all of them he felt distrust and resentment.

"If only I were on as intimate terms with her as they! But the devil take them all!"

3

He lazily descended to the shore, already greatly warmed by the sun, and began wiping his spectacles, observing Turoboev, who still stood nipping his small beard between two fingers and fanning his face with his grey hat. Makarov walked up to him, and both of them quietly went off in the direction of the mill.

"As a matter of fact, all these people who seem so clever are simply tiresome and insincere," Samghin thought, feeling that he was again being possessed by the mood of the night before. "In the soul of each of them, underlying their words, is probably something perfectly simple. The difference between them and myself lies only in their ability to appear believing or unbelieving; whereas I haven't as yet either a firm belief or a stable unbelief."

Clim Samghin — and it was not for the first time — pictured in his mind's eye a multitude of thoughts, poignant and of different values, mechanically invading him from outside. They were contradictory, and one had to isolate from among them those which were most suitable to him. But when he tried to put in order all that he had heard and read, to create a circle of opinions which might serve him as a shield against the violence of the clever ones and at the same time emphasize with sufficient vividness his personality, he could not succeed. He felt that there was swirling within him a slow whirlwind of opinions, ideas and theories. But this whirlwind was merely enervating him without becoming absorbed by his soul and controlled by his reason. Sometimes he was frightened by the conception of himself as a void in which there were ceaselessly seething words and thoughts which stirred him, yet had no power to give him warmth and vitality.

He often questioned himself: "Am I then just stupid?"

On this hot day, when, sitting on the sand, he saw Turoboev and Makarov, returning from the mill with Alena between them, a consoling idea came to him.

"I'm agitating myself in vain. As a matter of fact, it's all very simple: my hour to believe is not yet come. But already, deep in my soul, the seed of a true faith is maturing — my faith! It's not yet clear to me; but this mysterious force is driving off

everything foreign, not allowing me to adopt it. There are ideas which are for me, and which are not for me. The first I must feel with my emotions; the others I recognize with my mind. I have not as yet encountered ideas which are 'chemically affinitive' to me. Kutuzov correctly says that for every social unit there exists a circle of views and opinions chemically affinitive to it."

This memory of Kutuzov somewhat confused Clim; he felt himself inwardly stumbling against some contradiction, but he rapidly skirted it, saying to himself:

"There's a tangle here; but it merely proves that to utilize the ideas of others is dangerous. There's a proofreader in me who notices these errors."

After this Samghin returned to his first conjecture:

"That's why, at times, it seems to me that my thoughts are seething in empty space, and what I felt during the night is, of course, the maturing of my faith."

He smiled cautiously, gladdened by his solution, but not yet perfectly convinced of its value. However, to convince himself of this was no longer difficult. After a few moments more of thought, he rose, stretched himself with pleasure, easing his tired muscles, and cheerfully set out for home.

4

Varavka and Liutov were sitting at a table, Liutov with his back to the door. Entering the room, Clim heard his words:

"The first violin in the newspaper is not the editorial writer, but the *feuilletonist.*"

Varavka greeted Clim with a grumble:

"Where were you? We were looking for you to have breakfast, and couldn't find you. But where's Turoboev? With the

girls? Hm — Yes! Tell you what, Clim: Be a good fellow, transcribe these two little papers."

Liutov glanced suspiciously at Clim from under his eyebrows; then, bending over a sheet of paper and underlining something in pencil, he said:

"Probably my uncle will not meet your conditions."

And, having nervously seized a bottle on the table, he poured some beer into his glass. There were already three bottles empty. Clim went away, and, as he transcribed the papers, tried to catch the indistinct voices of Varavka and Liutov. Their voices were almost equally high-pitched, and at times they squealed so strangely that they sounded as if two little dogs, locked up in a room, were, in their boredom, yowling angrily at each other.

Turoboev, Makarov and the girls did not appear until evening tea. Clim immediately noticed that Lidia was not in a merry mood, but rather pensive. She was probably fatigued, he thought. Makarov looked drowsy, like a man who has just waked up. An absent-minded smile occasionally twitched his beautifully curved lips. He was smoking ceaselessly, as usual; a cigarette smouldered in a corner of his mouth, and its smoke compelled Makarov to keep his left eye half-closed. Alena regarded Turoboev intently; the usual contemptuous expression of her cold eyes had given place to a look of earnest wonder. They all arrived at the moment when Clim Samghin was listening to the wordy rioting between Varavka and Liutov.

There was something hungry, sensuous, and even ludicrous in the fury with which they disputed. It seemed that they had long been seeking an occasion to meet, in order to throw caustic comments at one another, make mocking grimaces, and in every way evince their mutual absence of respect. Varavka sprawled in a reed chair, his stubby legs stretched out, his hands thrust so deeply into the pockets of his trousers that they seemed thrust

into his belly. As he listened he puffed out his dark purple cheeks and narrowed his piggish eyes. When he talked his huge beard moved back and forth over his satiny blouse, like an enormous tongue just about to lick everything up.

"Permit me, permit me!" he would cry out shrilly. "You admit that the industries of the land are in an embryonic state; and despite this you also admit it possible, even necessary, to inspire the workers with an enmity toward the heads of the industries?"

"He-he-he!" Liutov snorted, in snuffling, scornful laughter. "Add to this, that the enmity of the classes inevitably retards development of culture, as is evidenced by the example of Europe."

Clim was amazed by Liutov's laughter, in which there was no humour, but an obvious and insulting brazenness.

Liutov was sitting on the edge of his chair with his back bent, his hands upon his knees. Clim watched his twisted eyes tremble as they tried to focus on Varavka's face, but they could not converge, and Liutov had finally to turn his head. Clim also saw that this fellow irritated everyone in the room except Lidia, who was pouring the tea. Makarov stared frowningly out beyond the door, which was open onto the terrace. He sat in silent disapproval, tapping a spoon abstractedly against the nails of his left hand.

"But the motives? Your motives?" Varavka shouted. "What causes you to admit enmity?"

"My family name," Liutov squealed. "I hate, ferociously, the boredom of life!" [29]

Turoboev made a wry face. Alena, noticing this, leaned toward Lidia, whispered something to her, and hid her flushed face behind the latter's shoulder. Without glancing at her, Lidia pushed her own cup away and frowned.

"Vladimir Ivanovich!" Varavka vociferated. "We're speaking seriously. Isn't that true?"

"Fully," Liutov shouted excitedly. "What is it you want, then?"

"Liberty."

"Anarchism?"

"As you will. If our princes and counts stubbornly preach anarchism,[30] please allow even a merchant's son to have an amiable chat on the subject. Do allow a man to experience all the delectation and all the horror — yes, horror — of freedom of action. Allow it without any limitations."

"And after that?" Turoboev loudly asked.

Liutov swung his chair around toward Turoboev and extended his hand to him.

"And after that he himself will limit himself with his will. Man is a coward; man is greedy. He's clever because he's a coward; exactly for that reason. Allow him to become frightened of himself, give him permission to do so, and you'll obtain most excellent and timid and business-like people, who will, without any loss of time, abbreviate themselves, bind themselves and each other, and yield — yield themselves to the god of sufficient-unto-the-day-is-the-good-thereof, and so to a peaceful existence."

Varavka jerked his hands from his pockets indignantly, and made a gesture of hopelessness.

"Pardon me, but this isn't said seriously!"

"May I say a few words?" Turoboev asked. Without waiting for permission he began talking, without looking at Liutov:

"When I listen to arguments there arises in me a rather offensive impression: we Russian people do not know how to be masters of the intellect. With us it isn't the man who directs his thought, but it's his thought that enslaves him. You remember, Samghin, Kutuzov used to call our arguments 'a parade of paradoxes'?"

"We-ll? And what of it?" Liutov squealed irritatingly.

"We've an amazingly large number of people who, having adapted the thought of another, cannot, and are even afraid, to check it up, to enter their own corrections; so they attempt only to straighten it out, to make it keener, and to bring it out of the bounds of logic, beyond the bounds of the possible. In general, it seems to me that thinking for the Russian is something unaccustomed and even frightening, although seductive. This inability to be a master of reason evokes in some people a terror before it, an enmity toward it, and in others a slavish submission to its play — a play which quite frequently corrupts people."

Liutov, rubbing his hands hard, smiled sneeringly. Clim reflected here again, as so often before, he was compelled to hear wise words from the lips of unpleasant people. He approved Liutov's talk about the necessity of liberty. Turoboev's discourse about the Russian inability to master thought seemed true to him. Falling into a brown study, he missed hearing something Turoboev said, and was startled by Liutov's shout:

"Vanity of vanities!"

"We have a barbaric cupidity for thought, especially for that which is glittering, that reminds one of the greediness of savages for glass beads," Turoboev said, looking away from Liutov, studying the fingers of his right hand. "I think that only thus is it possible to explain such curiosities as Voltairians who believe in serfdom; the children of priests who are Darwinists; idealists who come from the first guild of the merchants; and the Marxists from the same class."

"Is that a brick thrown over my fence?" Liutov asked loudly.

"No, I don't want to step on anybody's corns; for I'm not trying to convince, I'm merely discoursing," Turoboev answered, looking out the window. Clim was very much struck by the soft tone of his answer. Liutov was writhing, leaping up in his chair. Preparing to contradict, he was scrutinizing everybody in the

room; but, realizing that Turoboev was being listened to attentively, he had perforce to keep silent.

"I don't know whether this cupidity for the property of others can be explained by our country's necessity of organizing ideas," said Turoboev, getting up.

Liutov also jumped up:

"And what of the Slavophiles? What of the Narodniki?"

"'The first are no longer here, and the others are far away'—from reality," answered Turoboev, smiling for the first time during the discussion.

Pouncing upon him, Liutov shouted:

"But even you—even you—aren't independent in your thoughts. Oh, no! Chaadev. . . ."

"Had a look at Russia with the eyes of an intelligent and loving European."

"No, wait a bit—don't prompt me!"

Leaping at Turoboev, Liutov pushed him out onto the terrace, and there began shouting:

"Party thought. . . ."

"They assert that anything else is impossible. . . ."

"A strange type," Varavka muttered, and by his sidelong glance in Alena's direction Clim realized that this was said about Liutov.

For some two minutes the four people in the room were silent, listening to the dispute on the terrace. The fifth, Makarov, was shamelessly sleeping in a corner on a low, backless divan. Lidia and Alena were sitting side by side, shoulder to shoulder. Lidia's head was turned to one side; one could not see her face. Her friend was whispering something in her ear. Varavka, closing his eyes, smoked away at a cigar.

"And now, having shown each other the flags of their originality . . . What's that?"

A third voice, hoarse and despondent, spoke:

"Perhaps you'd like to go huntin' for catfish, gents? There's a catfish lives hereabouts, just for your pleasure, weighin' some ninety pounds. It's an interestin' thing for a pastime."

Clim went out on the terrace. Before him stood the *mouzhik* with the wooden leg. He lifted up his fuzzy face eagerly, striving to convince:

"I would, for some five-and-twenty roubles or so, arrange this little hunt right well. 'Tis a most dangerous fish. Afterwards you could brag to your relatives and your friends."

Turoboev went off to one side. Liutov, with his neck craned, was attentively studying the *mouzhik*, a broad-shouldered husky fellow with a magnificent head of brown hair. He wore a beltless red blouse; his one-and-a-half legs were dressed in blue trousers. In one hand he held a knife, in the other, a wooden pitcher. As he talked, he whittled at its chipped edge with the knife, glancing up at the gentlefolk from time to time with his pale eyes. His face was somber and business-like. His voice had a hopeless ring, and he frowned when he stopped talking.

Liutov hurriedly went down to him, and said:

"Let's go."

He went toward the river. The *mouzhik* awkwardly hobbled after him. Alena, in the room, began to laugh.

"How do you like Liutov?" Clim asked Turoboev, who had perched himself on the railing of the terrace. "Isn't he original?"

"He's not one who arouses my respect; but he's a curious fellow," Turoboev answered, after a short reflection and in a low voice: "He spoke very maliciously of Kropotkin, Bakunin, Tolstoi, and of a merchant's son's right to chat amiably. That was the cleverest thing he said."

5

One after the other, Lidia and Alena walked out of the room. Lidia sat down on the terrace. Alena, shading her eyes with a hand, looked at the sinking sun; then gliding noiselessly up to Turoboev, she said:

"I didn't think that you, too, were fond of arguing!"

"Is that a shortcoming?"

"Yes, of course. It's rather senile."

"'Our generation knoweth not youth,'" Turoboev said.

"Oh, Nadson!" Alena made a grimace of contempt. "It seems to me that the love for argument is present only in unsuccessful and unhappy people. The happy ones live in silence."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. But for the unhappy ones it's hard to confess that they don't know how to live; so they shout and speechify, and always extraneously, never about themselves, but about a love for the people, in which no one believes."

"Oho! You're a brave girl," said Turoboev. He laughed softly.

The gentle tone of his laughter irritated Samghin. He asked ironically:

"Do you call that bravery? But how would you describe the *narodovoltzi,* the revolutionaries?" [31]

"They, too, are brave people; especially those who start a revolution unavariciously, out of curiosity."

"You're now talking of adventurers."

"I? I'm discussing people who find the conditions of life cramping and who attempt to hasten events. Cortez and Columbus, now, were also exponents of the will of the people. Professor Mendeleëv is no less a revolutionary than is Karl Marx.[32] For curiosity is truly bravery. And when curiosity is transformed into passion, it then becomes love."

Glancing at Turoboev over her shoulder, Lidia asked:

"Are you talking sincerely?"

"Yes," he answered her, but not immediately.

Clim realized that this man was irritating him more and more. He wanted to contradict his equalization of curiosity and bravery, but he could not think of any refutations. As always, when paradoxes were uttered in a tone of truth, he was envious of those who were able to make them.

6

Liutov came up, shouting as he waved his handkerchief:

"At dawn we're going to catch that catfish! I made the bargain for thirteen roubles."

Running up on the terrace he asked Alena:

"My betrothed! You have never gone to catch a catfish?"

She walked past him, saying:

"Neither fish, nor cranes in the sky."

"I understand!" Liutov cried. "You prefer the bird in the hand! I approve."

Clim saw Alena turn around sharply and take a step toward her fiancé; but she walked up to Lidia instead and sat down beside her, pluming herself like a hen before it rains. Rubbing his hands and moistening his lips, Liutov stood, eagerly watching everybody with his furtive eyes; his face seemed somehow to be growing tipsy-looking.

"We live for the fulfillment of sins," he muttered. "But you take the *mouzhik*, now — Yes, sir!"

Apparently everybody had remarked that he had returned in an even more raging humour; thus Samghin explained to himself the impolite silence that followed Liutov's remark. Turoboev leaned his back against a pillar of the terrace; with his arms

crossed on his breast, he tried to catch Liutov's shifting eyes, as though expecting attack.

"I agree!" Liutov said, walking up with small steps until he stood close to Turoboev. "'Tis true! we either circle in our tracks in the wilds of reason, or we run away from it like frightened fools."

He made such a quick gesture with his right hand that Turoboev, blanching, staggered aside, ducking the expected blow. Liutov evidently did not notice his movement or his wrathful face. He continued, waving his hands in the way Boris Varavka had when he was drowning.

"But that's because we are a metaphysical people. For us, in every county statistician there's hidden a Pythagoras, and the statistician accepts Marx as he would a Swedenborg or a Jacob Boehm. And science we cannot understand otherwise than as metaphysics; for me, for instance, mathematics are truly the mysticism of figures, or, more simply, witchcraft."

"That's nothing new," Turoboev remarked quietly.

"It's all piffle about the German being a philosopher to the manner born; that's just plain bosh!" Liutov talked very quickly and lowered his voice. "The German philosophizes mechanically, according to tradition, as a habit, of holidays. But we do it passionately, suicidally, day and night, not only in our dreams, but on the breasts of our beloved, and on our death bed. Truly speaking, we philosophize because all this, you know, doesn't come from reason, but from imagination. We don't use our reason, but dream with all the force of the bestiality of nature. 'Bestiality' must be understood, not in a condemnatory, but in a mensurate, sense."

With a wave of his hands he drew a wide circle in the air.

"Understand it thus. Boundlessness and insatiability. Intellects

are not a common product among us; ours are insane talents. And we all are stifling — everybody, from top to bottom. We're flying and falling. A *mouzhik* is elevated to the presidency of the Academy of Sciences; aristocrats come down among the *mouzhiks*. And where else will you find such a diversity and plenitude of sects as among us? And — the most monstrous: Castrates, Flagellants, the Red Death. We be those who burn themselves at the stake — we burn in a dream — from Ivan the Terrible and Avvacum the Archpriest, to Bakunin, christened Mikhaila, to Nechaev and Vsevolod Garshin. Do not thrust Nechaev away; you mustn't! Inasmuch as he is a splendidly Russian man! In spirit he is own brother to Constantin Leonitiev and Pobedonostzev — also Constantin." [33]

Liutov hopped about, waving his arms, looking as if he might explode; but he talked ever more quietly, at times almost in a whisper. Seeing him this way he seemed eerie, intoxicating, and actually passionate, sensuous through and through. It was noticeable that Turoboev found it oppressive to listen to his whispering and his soft howling, to look at this excited red face with its bulging eyes.

"How on earth will Alena live with him?" Clim reflected, glancing at her. She sat with her head lying on Lidia's knees. Lidia, playing with Alena's braid, listened attentively.

"You apparently agree with Dostoievski about many things?" Turoboev asked.

Liutov staggered away from him.

"No! In what? Not guilty! Don't like him."

Makarov appeared in the doorway and angrily asked:

"Vladimir, do you want any milk? It's cold."

"Dostoievski was seduced by convict life. What is his convict life? A parade. He was an inspector in this parade of convict life, and all his life couldn't write of anything but convicts; but the

righteous man, in his case, was the *Idiot*. He never knew the people; he never gave the people a thought."

Makarov came out, handed Lidia a glass of milk, and sat down beside her, grumbling loudly:

"But will there be an end soon to this discourse?"

Liutov threatened him with his fist.

"Our people is the freest on earth. It's not bound by anything from within. It has no love for reality. It loves all sorts of stunts and hocus-pocus. Wizards and miracle-workers. Little innocents. Itself is some kind of little innocent itself. It's capable tomorrow of adopting Mohammedanism — on trial. Yes, on trial! It's capable of burning down all its huts and of wandering off, castrated, into the desert, into the sands, in search of a Prester John's Land."

Turoboev thrust his hands in his pockets and coldly asked:

"Well, what's what, in the final upshot?"

Liutov looked about, evidently in order to draw more attention to himself, and answered, swaying:

"Why, this: that the people want not that freedom which the politicians are praising up to it, but such as can be granted them only by the priests — the freedom to commit frightful sin, all sorts of sin, in order to become frightened, and then find peace in themselves for the next three hundred years. There you have it! It's done. Everything's done. All sins have been fulfilled. All clean!"

"A strange theory," said Turoboev, shrugging his shoulders. He went down off the terrace into the gloom of the night, but before he had walked far he said loudly:

"Nevertheless, this is Dostoievski. If not according to his thoughts, then according to his spirit."

Liutov, narrowing his strabismic eyes, muttered:

"We live in the fulfillment of sins, and for the conquest of

temptations. Never having sinned, one does not have to repent; never having repented, one does not need to find salvation."

They all kept silent, gazing at the river. Over its black path a boat was silently moving; at its prow a brazier burned and smoked. A black man was moving the oars, and another man, with a long pole in his hands, stooped over the boat's side and aimed his pole at the brazier's reflection in the water. The reflection changed its forms miraculously. First it was a gold fish covered with many fins; then a deep red pit reaching to the bottom of the river, where the man with the pole would like to leap, but could not find the courage.

Liutov looked up at the sky, generously sprinkled with stars, and took out his watch.

"It isn't late yet. Would you like to take a stroll, Alena Markovna?"

"If it's going to be in silence, I do."

"In perfect silence?"

"I may allow Armenian anecdotes."

"Oh, well! Thanks even for that much!" Liutov said, helping his fiancée to rise. She took his arm.

When they were some thirty paces away, Lidia said quietly:

"I feel sorry for him."

Makarov muttered something unintelligible as Clim asked:

"Why sorry?"

Lidia did not reply, but Makarov said in a low voice:

"Did you notice how he shouted? That's because he wants to shout himself down."

"I don't understand."

"Well, what is there not to understand?" Lidia said, getting up. "See me home, Constantine."

They, too, went away. The sand crunched. In Varavka's room the little beads of the abacus could be heard clicking distinctly and

rapidly. The red fire on the boat was burning far off, near the mill dam. Clim, sitting on a step of the terrace, saw the white figure of the girl disappearing in the darkness, and tried to convince himself:

"I am not in love with her, am I?"

In order not to think, he went to Varavka and asked him if there was any need of his help. It turned out that there was. For two hours he sat at a table making copies of the projected contract between Varavka and the city government for the building of a new theatre. As he wrote he listened tensely. But everything around him preserved a stony silence. There was no sound of voices, no scraping of feet.

7

At sunrise Clim was standing under the willows near the mill dam, listening to the *mouzhik* with the wooden leg yarning in a low, inspired voice:

"The catfish, he's fond of porridge; a porridge of millet, now, or let's say of buckwheat porridge, that's his very first love. You can bribe catfish to do whatever you want to with porridge."

The *mouzhik's* peg leg had sunk into the sand; he stood leaning to one side, holding on with a strong gnarled hand to a small broken-off willow bough. He jerked his shoulders as he pulled the leg out of the sand; he shifted it to a different spot, where it went down again into the soft soil, and again the *mouzhik's* body leaned to one side.

"We've given porridge to this here beastie," he said, lowering his voice. His hairy face wore a triumphant expression; solemnity and joy shone in his eyes. "This here porridge we cook as hot as may be, and in a pot; this here pot, now, has a hole in it—D'you understand this thing?"

He winked at Liutov and turned to Varavka, who looked almost majestic in his cherry-coloured bathrobe. On his head was a green skull cap broidered with gold; on his feet, two-toned morocco boots.

"Well, then, he'll swallow the pot; whilst this here pot in his belly, bein' cracked already, it will fall apart, and then this here porridge will start in burnin' his guts — D'you understand this thing, your honour? He feels pain; he starts in to thrash about, he starts in to leap; and here's where we go and. . . ."

The rays of the sun beat down on Varavka's face; he shielded his eyes from the glare, and stroked his coppery beard.

Liutov, in wrinkled old clothes, covered with brown pine needles, looked as if he had just come from a prolonged orgy. His face had grown yellower; the whites of his half-insane eyes were bloodshot. Smiling, he said softly to his betrothed:

"Of course he lies! But never a devil, save the Russian *mouzhik*, could invent such nonsense!"

The girls, who had not had their full sleep, stood side by side, alternately yawning and shivering in the cool freshness of the morning. A rosy mist lay over the river, and through it, dimly mirrored in the radiant water, Clim saw the familiar faces of the girls as indistinguishably similar. Makarov, dressed in a white blouse with the collar unbuttoned, his neck bare and hair rumpled, sat on the sand at the girls' feet. He resembled the cheap reproduction of the portrait of a little Italian boy, given as a prize with *Neeva*.[34] Samghin noticed, for the first time, that Makarov's broad-chested body was wedge-shaped, too, like the figure of the vagabond Inokov.

To one side, very erect, Turoboev stood, gazing steadily at the back of Liutov's knobby neck, and slowly shifting his cigarette from one corner of his mouth to the other, as if he were whispering something to himself.

"Well, what do you say — Is it going to be soon?" Liutov asked impatiently.

"Speak a wee bit lower, sir," the *mouzhik* said in a stern whisper. "It's a cunnin' beast — he hears you!" And, turning in the direction of the mill, he shouted:

"Mikola! What d'you say?"

Two voices answered, a man's and a woman's.

"Ahoy! What d'you want?"

"Take a look — Did he gobble it up?"

"I did look."

"Well?"

"He gobbled it up."

Liutov jostled the *mouzhik's* shoulder angrily.

"What are you up to? I mustn't talk, but you're allowed to yell at the top of your lungs?"

The *mouzhik* glanced at him in amazement, and smiled so that his entire face seemed to bristle.

"Lordy — why, this here same catfish knows me, but you're a stranger to him. Every creature has a care for its life."

The *mouzhik* uttered these words in a whisper. Then, shading his eyes with a hand and looking at the river, he said very quietly:

"Now look! It's goin' to start in burnin' him now, and he'll take to leaping. Right away."

He uttered this so convincingly, with a face so inspired, that everybody moved toward the bank, and even the roseately-golden water seemed to halt its slow current. With his peg leg sinking deep into the sand at each step, the *mouzhik* hobbled off toward the mill.

Alena gave a frightened start.

"Look! Look! Over there near the shore — there's some small dark thing under that bush!"

Clim did not see any dark thing. He did not believe in a catfish that was fond of buckwheat porridge. But he realized that everybody else believed, even Turoboev, and apparently Liutov. It must have made their eyes ache to look at the glittering water, yet they all gazed steadily, as though trying to penetrate to the bottom of the river. This, for a minute, confused Samghin: What if the catfish should suddenly leap up?

"There he is — Swimming!" Alena began whispering again, but Turoboev said aloud:

"That's the shadow of a cloud."

"Sh, sh!" Varavka hissed.

Everybody looked at the sky. There upon its great lonely arc floated a small white cloud, no bigger than a fleece. From the thick growth of bushes and reeds near the dam, a boat nosed out noiselessly. The lame *mouzhik* stood up in it, leaning on a gaff and waving his hand to his public. Silently lowering his oars into the water, a blond broad-shouldered lad in a grey blouse rowed the boat along. He sat motionless as if he were petrified. Only his wrists moved, and it seemed as if the oars were moving of their own accord, clawing the water with silky cat's paws. Suddenly the lame fellow stopped waving his arm and lifted it above his head, without taking his eyes from the water, and became frozen still, too. The boat described an angle from shore to shore, then another angle. The *mouzhik* slowly dropped his left arm, and just as slowly raised up his right, with the gaff in it.

"Hit him!" he barked out, and with all his force plunged the harpoon into the water.

Clim was standing behind the others. He saw that the lame fellow had struck at an empty spot; but when the *mouzhik*, having clumsily swayed, pitched overboard, flat on his chest, Clim reflected with certainty: "That was done on purpose!"

But the lame fellow immediately shook his assurance.

" Mi-issed him! " said he, and set up a mournful, wolfish howl as he wallowed in the river. His red blouse had blown up on his back in a monstrous bubble; his peg leg with the metal ring of iron at its tip flashed in the water; he snorted and shook his head; glassy drops of water flew in all directions from his hair and beard. He clutched at the stern of the boat with one hand and beat the fist of the other against its side in despair as he groaned:

" E-eh, I missed! Mikolka, you devil, how is it you didn't give him a whack with the oar, eh? With the oar, now, you fool! Over the head, eh? You've put me to shame, damn your puss! "

The lad leisurely picked up the gaff and laid it along the gunwale. Then he silently helped the lame fellow to crawl into the boat and rowed it to shore with powerful strokes. Sprawling out on the sand, the *mouzhik,* wet and slippery, with his hands spread out, was desperately repentant:

" I missed him, gents! I'm disgraced. Do forgive me, for Christ's sake! I made a little bit of a mistake: I was aiming for to get him right in the head, but went past him! D'you understand this thing? Oh, Holy Fathers, what could it have been? "

His grief had changed his voice; it was high-pitched, piteous. His bloated face had lengthened, and now expressed the most sincere distress. Over his temples, over his forehead, and under his eyes, drops of water streamed as though all his face had burst into a sweat of tears. His pale eyes had a confused and guilty glitter. He squeezed the water from his hair and beard, spattering it over the sand and on the girls' skirts as he shouted wearily:

" He was enormous — more than four *pounds!* He was a bull, and not a catfish — honest to God! His whiskers was *that* long! "

And the lame fellow measured off a foot of air with his hands.

" I was mistaken," reflected Clim. " He did see the catfish."

"He stands there on the river bottom, on the very bottom; I can see him, he was deep in thought, and his whiskers was moving," aggrievedly and solemnly the lame fellow narrated.

"What d'you think of him — eh?" Liutov cried, enraptured.

"His acting is excellent," Turoboev confirmed, smiling, and took out a little wallet of yellow leather.

Liutov held his hand back:

"Pardon me — this was my enterprise!"

Lidia gazed at the *mouzhik* with her lips pursed, frowning. Varavka regarded him with curiosity. Alena, puzzled, was asking everybody:

"But was there really a catfish? Was there or wasn't there?"

Clim went off to one side, feeling himself doubly deceived.

"Let's go," Lidia said to her friend, but Liutov cried out:

"Wait just a minute!" And he asked the *mouzhik* pointblank:

"Fooled us, all right?"

"He fooled us, all right, the devil," the lame fellow agreed, sadly spreading out his hands.

"No, not the devil, but you. Did you fool us?"

"What do you mean now? Fooled who?" The *mouzhik*, amazed, retreated before Liutov.

"Don't be afraid! I'll pay you the money just the same, and will add something for vodka. Only tell me straight: Did you fool us?"

"Leave him alone," Turoboev requested; and the lame fellow, having surveyed everybody with his uncomprehending eyes, asked with magnificent naïveté:

"How could I ever fool gentlefolk?"

Liutov slapped the *mouzhik's* wet shoulder and burst into high, womanish laughter. Turoboev, too began laughing, quietly and shamefacedly. Even Clim smiled, so amusing was the childlike fright in the confused blinking eyes of the bearded *mouzhik*.

"For is a body allowed to fool gentlefolk?" he muttered, studying everybody again, while the fright in his eyes gave place to a searching look; his chin quivered.

"The devil!" Varavka exclaimed, making a hopeless gesture, and smiled. Liutov kept on laughing unrestrainedly, his eyes shut, his head thrown back; the sound was as if glass were tinkling in his throat.

The *mouzhik,* after a glance at Varavka, grinned broadly, but immediately covered his mouth with his hand. This failed to help; and having loudly snorted into his palm, he too made a gesture as if things were too much for him, and cried out in a high falsetto:

"These be our sins!"

He, too, began laughing, at first uncertainly, then less shyly and more freely, until finally his loud guffaws completely drowned out Liutov's choked giggles. Opening his hairy mouth wide, he prodded the sand with his peg leg; he rocked and held his sides, shaking his head:

"Oh, Lordy! . . . Oh-ho-ho, these be our sins, honest to God!" As he stood laughing, the wet sheen of his body seemed to extend to his robust laughter until it too took on an oily tone.

"You ch-cheat," Liutov shouted. "Where—where's the catfish?"

"And so I'm aimin' at him. . . ."

"The catfish?"

"I missed. . . ."

"Where's the catfish?"

"He's alive yet."

They looked at each other and burst into fresh spasms of laughter. Tears streamed from the *mouzhik's* eyes.

"Well, here is something extraordinary," Turoboev said, shrugging his shoulders, and went off, running after the girls and Ma-

karov. Samghin, too, went after them, followed by the *mouzhik's* groans of laughter:

"Oh, Lordy — that's how it is!"

Well ahead of them, Alena shouted indignantly:

"He ought to be punished for deceiving people!"

"That's silly, Alena," Lidia stopped her sternly.

They walked on in silence, but Liutov soon caught up with them. "D'you understand this thing?" he asked, wiping the sweat and tears from his face with a handkerchief as he hopped and twirled in front of them, trying to catch their eyes. He interfered with their walking. Turoboev glanced at him askance and dropped back two paces.

"He took us in neatly, eh?" he said. "He has a talent. This is art! The authentic always takes one in."

"That wasn't at all foolishly said," Turoboev said, smiling to Clim. "In general, he's not foolish — But how on edge he is!"

"That'll do, Volodiya," Makarov shouted angrily. "What are you throwing dust in our eyes for? Wait until they make you a professor of some sort of eloquence, then you can go right ahead and depress us and throw dust."

"Kostiya, you're a frivolous bird! Understand this thing!"

"No, seriously: Stop it."

"You shout an awful lot," Alena complained.

"Well — I won't."

"Like a madman!"

"I'm silent!"

He actually was silent, until Lidia, taking his arm, asked:

"How is it that *mouzhik* didn't arouse your indignation?"

"Me? But why?" Liutov exclaimed wonderingly. "On the contrary, Lidochka, I gave him three roubles additional, and my thanks. He's clever. Our *mouzhik* is an amazingly clever chap! He teaches one! Make me indignant? Never!"

Halting, he stroked Lidia's hand as it lay in the crook of his arm, and smiled happily:

"But now, of course, you wouldn't believe in this catfish, would you? This little river isn't meant for catfish, my dearest girl!"

He again burst into laughter.

Makarov and Alena began to walk more rapidly. Clim fell back, looked at Turoboev and Varavka, who were slowly strolling toward the country house, and sat down on a bench near the landing of the bathhouse to meditate.

He recalled that yesterday Makarov had remarked, *en passant:*

"Yours is a healthy psyche, Clim! You live like a monument on a square; all around you is noise, shouting and clatter, but you look at everything and are agitated by nothing."

"But his words merely attest that I know how not to betray myself," Clim deliberated. "However, the rôle of an attentive listener and observer, to one side, from behind a corner, is no longer worthy of me. It's time for me to be more active. If I begin cautiously plucking their peacock feathers off people, it'll benefit them very much. Yes. Some psalm speaks of 'falsehood for the sake of salvation.' That's possible, but on rare occasions, and only 'for salvation,' not merely for a game with one another."

His thoughts took this direction for some time, until, feeling himself in a militant mood, ready for battle, he decided to go to Alena's, where everybody had gone, except Varavka. But suddenly he remembered that it was time for him to go back to town. On his way to the station, over the difficult sandy road between hills ornamented with small twisted pines, Clim's militant mood slipped away. As he plodded along, his long shadow pushing on before him, he reflected how hard it was to locate one's self amid the chaos of the thoughts of others, thoughts behind which were hidden incomprehensible emotions.

8

He arrived at home half an hour ahead of the Spivak couple. His mother met them majestically, as if they were bureaucrats placed at her personal disposal. She conversed gravely, intoning French phrases through her nose and plying her lorgnette before her thickly powdered face. Before inviting her guests to sit down, she comfortably seated herself. Clim noticed that his mother's stilted manner was amusing Madame Spivak, whose eyes took on a mocking expression. Elizaveta Lievovna, wearing an unusually dark mantle, seemed to have grown older and monastically modest; she was not as interesting as she had been in Peterburg. But Clim's nostrils were pleasantly titillated by a familiar perfume, and in his memory rang the beautiful phrase: " ' By thee, by thee alone.' "

The little pianist, in a pongee summer jacket, clung to his chair silently like a bat, nodding his head in time to the women's words. Samghin condescendingly shook his hand. It was pleasant to see that this man, with a face that looked as if it had been unskillfully carved out of yellow ivory, was completely unworthy of the handsome woman sitting beside him. When Clim's mother had exchanged a few polite phrases with her, Elizaveta Lievovna, with a sigh, said:

" I feel very depressed, Vera Petrovna, because on our very first meeting I must inform you of something sad: Dmitri Ivanovich has been arrested."

" Oh, my God! " Vera Petrovna exclaimed, falling back in her chair. Her eyelashes quivered, and the tip of her nose turned red.

" Yes! " said Spivak loudly. " They came at night and took him away."

" And what of Kutuzov? " angrily asked Clim.

Spivak replied that Kutuzov, three weeks before Dmitri's arrest, had gone home to bury his father.

Clim's mother — carefully, in order not to disturb the powder — applied a miniature handkerchief to her eyes; but Clim saw that there was no need of the handkerchief; her eyes were perfectly dry.

"My God! What was it for?" she asked dramatically.

"I believe it isn't serious," Elizaveta Spivak said, consolingly. "An acquaintance of Dmitri Ivanovich's was arrested — a teacher in a factory school — and his brother, a student by the name of Popov. It seems that he's an acquaintance of yours as well?" she asked Clim.

"No!" Clim flatly denied.

9

After a quarter of an hour Clim's mother evidently thought that her grief had been expressed with sufficient convincingness, and invited the guests to have tea in the garden.

The birds were chirping happily; the flowers were in full bloom; the velvet sky filled the garden with a blue spring radiance; it would have been indecent to discuss sad things. Vera Petrovna began asking Spivak about music. He immediately livened up, and pulling blue threads out of his necktie and making little commas in the air with his fingers, he told her that there was no such thing as music in the West.

"You have merely machines there. From the minuet and the gavotte, they have reached only this:"

And he hummed a hackneyed popular tune.

"Don't pick at your necktie," his wife commanded.

He meekly placed his hands on the table, as if on a keyboard, and the end of his necktie fell into his glass of tea. This embar-

rassed him. As he dried the necktie with his handkerchief, he said:

"There's Grieg in Norway. Very interesting. They say that he's an absent-minded fellow."

Then he lapsed into silence again. The women were smiling, conversing more and more animatedly, but Clim felt that they disliked each other. Presently Spivak asked Clim, rather tardily:

"How's your health?"

But when Clim offered him some strawberries, he refused:

"They give me nettle-rash."

"Show Elizaveta Lievovna the wing of the house," Clim's mother suggested.

"This is a curious town," said the former, taking Clim by the arm as she walked cautiously along the garden path. "Such a simple-hearted grumbling town. Its drowsiness was the first thing that struck me as soon as I came out of the railway station. It must be as dreary here as in purgatory. Are there fires here very often? I'm afraid of fires."

The rubbish of paper piled up in the rooms of the wing reminded Clim of Katin the writer. Elizaveta Spivak, glancing at them, said:

"One can make quite a snug nest here. And there's a window, looking out on the garden. Probably fuzzy little caterpillars from the apple trees crawl into the rooms? The little birds will sing early in the morning — very early!"

She sighed:

"Don't you like the rooms?" Clim asked with regret, walking out into the garden. Bending her neck gracefully, she smiled to him over her shoulder.

"No — why? It would have been very convenient for two sisters, two old maids. Or for newlyweds. Let's sit down," she in-

vited, standing by a bench under a cherry tree. "Let them bargain over there."

Looking about, she continued talking thoughtfully:

"A splendid garden. And the wing is nice. Just made for newlyweds. To have one's allotted fill of loving in this quietness, and then — However, young man, you wouldn't understand," she suddenly concluded with a smile which somewhat confused Clim: Was a sneer hidden in it, or a challenge?

Glancing at the sky, and picking a leaf from a branch of the cherry tree, she asked:

"However do they live here in the winter? The theatre, cards, petty love affairs out of ennui, gossip — Isn't that so? I would have preferred to live in Moscow; probably one wouldn't grow accustomed to it very soon. You haven't yet acquired habits, have you?"

Clim was amazed. He had not suspected that this woman could talk so simply and lightly. Simplicity was the one thing he had not expected from her. In Peterburg, she had seemed locked within herself, bound up by serious thoughts. It was pleasant to have her talk to him as to an old and intimate friend. Among other things, she asked whether the wing was rented out with or without fuel. She asked several such practical questions, but all lightly, in passing.

"The portrait over the piano — is that your foster father? He has the beard of a very rich man."

Glancing intently into her face, Clim said that Turoboev would arrive soon.

"Yes?"

"He's selling his land."

"Is that so?"

Clim felt gladdened by her calm tone; he was also glad when, having touched him with her elbow, she did not apologize.

Clim's mother came toward them with Spivak. The wings of his cape fluttered as though he were striving to rise up from the earth. He was saying:

"This'll be written in nones, very low: *Toom — Toom. . . .*"

His wife unceremoniously interrupted his singing. She began to discuss the wing of the house with Vera Petrovna, and they went inside. Spivak sat down beside Clim and began talking politely in grammar-book sentences:

"Your mother is a very amiable person. She knows music. Is the cemetery far from here? I love everything elegiac. The finest thing we Russians have is the cemetery. Everything that has to do with death is splendid with the Russians."

The women's voices broke through his pauses.

"Isn't that so?" Madame Spivak was saying demandingly.

"I'll have that done for you."

"Are we finished?"

"Yes."

10

A few minutes later, when he returned from escorting the Spivaks, Clim saw his mother still sitting in the garden, under the same cherry tree. She sat with her head sunk dejectedly on her bosom, her arms thrown back over the back of the bench.

"My God, she is certainly none too pleasant a lady," she said in a tired voice. "A Jewess? How strange — she's so practical. She bargains as if she were in a market place. However, she doesn't look like a Jewess. Didn't it seem to you that she told me about Dmitri with a shade of pleasure? Some people are very fond of imparting bad news."

With vexation she struck her little fist on her knee.

"Ah, Dmitri, Dmitri! Now I'll have to go to Peterburg."

Rosy twilight pervaded the garden, tinting the white flowers.

Their perfumes became more intoxicating. The stillness was unbroken.

"I'm going to change my dress; you wait for me here. It's stifling inside the house."

Clim followed her with frowning eyes. What his mother had said about Elizaveta Spivak was completely at variance with his own impression. But his mistrust of people, becoming ever more easily aroused, had clutched at his mother's words, and Clim fell into thought, rapidly sorting over the words, gestures and smiles of this woman who pleased him. The tender silence put him in a lyrical mood and would not allow him to find in Elizaveta Spivak's conduct anything which would have justified his mother's statement. Other thoughts bubbled up lightly: Elizaveta would move into the wing of the house; he would begin paying attention to her, and would cure himself of his strange and oppressive inclination for Lidia.

His mother returned in a yellow negligée, clasped together with silver buckles, and with soft slippers on her feet. She looked miraculously younger.

"You don't think that your brother's arrest will have any effect on you?" she asked quietly.

"Why should it?"

"You lived together."

"That doesn't mean that we share the same views."

"Yes, but. . . ."

She became silent, rubbing the little wrinkles at her temples, and suddenly she said with a sigh:

"This Spivak hasn't a bad figure — even her pregnancy doesn't spoil it."

With a sudden shudder, Clim asked quietly:

"She's pregnant? Did she tell you?"

"My God, I can see for myself! Are you very well acquainted with her?"

"No," said Clim. He took off his spectacles, and bent his head low as he polished them. He knew that the expression on his face was angry, and he did not want to have his mother see it. He felt deceived. Everybody was deceiving him: the purchased Marguerita, the consumptive Nekhaeva; Lidia, too, was deceiving him, representing herself to him not as she really was; finally, even Spivak had deceived him; he no longer could think as pleasantly of her as he had thought an hour before.

"How pitiless one must be, what a cold heart one must have, in order to deceive an ailing husband," Samghin thought indignantly. "And as for my mother — how unceremoniously and rudely she thrusts herself into my life."

"Oh my God!" Clim's mother sighed. Clim glanced at her. She was sitting tensely erect; her face, drawn into dismal lines, was the face of an old woman. Her eyes were wide open, and she bit her lips as though restraining a cry of pain. Clim felt irritated with her, but some particle of his pity for himself passed to this woman. He asked very quietly:

"Do you feel sad?"

With a shudder, she closed her eyes.

"At my age there's little to be merry about."

Then pulling at the collar of her negligée with a trembling hand, she whispered:

"Already, somewhere near, there's a woman awaiting you — a girl; you'll fall in love with her."

In her whisper Clim caught something unusual; the thought came to him that she, always so proud and restrained, would at any moment burst into tears. He could not imagine her weeping.

"Let's not talk of that, Mamma."

She was convulsively rubbing her cheek against his shoulder, and, gasping from a dry cough, or from an unsuccessful attempt at a laugh, was whispering:

"I don't know how to talk of this, but it's necessary. Of magnanimity, of compassion toward woman, in a word! Yes! Of compassion. The most lonesome being in the universe is the woman, the mother. She's lonely to the verge of insanity. It's not of myself only I'm speaking — No!"

"Would you like me to fetch you some water?" Clim asked, and immediately knew that his question was silly. He wanted to embrace her, but she swung away from him, trembling, trying to restrain her sobs. Her words came ever more passionately and bitterly:

"Hours in reward for days, nights and years of loneliness."

"That's what Nekhaeva said," Clim remembered.

"Pride, which is trampled on so cruelly. A habitual — just grasp this! — a habitual lack of desire on the part of others to look into your soul kindly, tenderly. I'm not saying just the right thing, but one can't put it in words."

"And there's no need to!" Clim felt like saying. "There's no need to; this debases you. All this has been told me before by a consumptive, ugly girl."

His impulse to console her could not find a place; his mother was whispering, gasping:

"If one weeps, then one is called a hysterical woman, is offered physicians, bromides, water."

The son, in confusion, stroked his mother's hand and kept silent, finding no words of comfort; he kept on thinking that she was telling him all this in vain. But she was laughing in actual hysterics.

"You must learn this: all women are incurably sick with loneliness. This is the cause of all that is incomprehensible to you men

— unexpected infidelities, and everything. None of you seeks, none of you thirsts for such intimacy with a human being as we do."

Feeling that he must try to calm her, Clim said:

"Do you know, Makarov discusses women quite originally. . . ."

"Our egoism is not a sin," his mother continued, without listening to him. "This egoism springs from the coldness of life; because everything within one aches dully: the soul, the body, the bones. . . ."

She stopped suddenly and looked at her son, then moved away from him and gazed silently at the green network of the trees. A minute later she tucked up a lock of hair which had fallen on her cheek, rose from the bench, and went away, leaving her son depressed by the scene.

"Of course, she's saying all this because she's growing older, and becoming jealous," he reflected, frowning, and looking at his watch. His mother had sat with him for not more than a half an hour, yet it seemed as if two hours had passed. It was unpleasant to feel that during this half-hour she had been lowered in his opinion, and again Clim Samghin reflected that in every human being could be revealed a flagpole on which he sent up the flag of his originality.

XIII

1

ON the very next day, in the morning, Varavka appeared unexpectedly. He was dishevelled. His little eyes glittered animatedly. Vera Petrovna's very first words to him were:

"Well, has this miss — or this lady — rented the house?"

"What miss?" Varavka asked.

"This acquaintance of Liutov's?"

"I didn't see any such person. There were two: Lidia and Alena. And three gallants — the devil take 'em!"

The heavy, stout Varavka resembled a monstrously magnified Chinese "God of the Beggars"; the hideous little figure of this god stood in the parlour on a mirror stand, and the caricatural quality of its form was inexplicably combined with a peculiar beauty. Rapidly and hungrily, as he swallowed pieces of ham, Varavka muttered:

"Turoboev's a freak. How do they say it? — A decadent, *Fin de siècle*, and all that sort of thing. Doesn't know how to sell. I bought his country house; we'll make it over into a technical school. Sold it cheap just as though it were stolen goods. All in all, he's an idiot of high-sprung descent. Liutov, buying land from him for Alena, tried to pluck him; and pluck him he would have, but I wouldn't allow it. Better to do it myself."

"Whatever are you saying?" Vera Petrovna reproached him softly.

" I'm talking honestly, One must know how to take. Especially from fools. That's how Sergei Witte plucks 'em." [35]

Varavka had become sated. He sighed, closed his eyes in delectation and drank a glass of wine. Then, fanning his face with a napkin, began again:

" This Liutov, on the other hand, is a most cunning *canaille;* Clim, you be careful! "

At this point Vera Petrovna, holding her head straight and immovable as if she were blind, told him of Dmitri's arrest. Varavka lifted his beard on his palm, looked at it, and blew it off.

" Well, what is this, a longing to go to prison, inherited from the senior line of the Samghins? "

" I'll have to take a trip to Peterburg."

" Of course," Varavka grumbled. He placed a hand on Clim's shoulder and rocked him to and fro.

" You, Brother, really ought to go to the Institute of Civil Engineers. We have an excess of lawyers, but Gambettas, as yet, aren't in demand. Prosecuting attorneys, too, run about twenty-five to each newspaper. But when we come to architects — No; we don't know how to build. Study to be an architect. Then we'll obtain a certain equilibrium: one brother builds, another destroys; and I, as contractor, profit both ways! "

He burst into laughter, his abdomen quaking. After that he proposed that Clim go to the country house:

" Some one of us ought to be there. I think I'll take Dronov there as a clerk. Well, I'm going to the notary public's."

Having seen him out of the house, Clim's mother said, sighing:

" What energy, what a great amount of intellect! "

" Yes," Clim agreed politely, but thought: " He tosses me about as if I were a ball! "

2

He arrived at the country house in the evening, and from the station took a road skirting the edge of a pine forest, in order not to go by the sandy road. Church bells had been brought by it into the hamlet recently, and it was deeply ploughed up by people and horses. Walking in the stillness was pleasant; the candle-like cones of the young pines reeked with a resinous odour; in the interstices between the mighty columns of the primeval forest red ribbons of sunbeams were stretched taut through the clear air; the bark of the pines shone like bronze and cloth-of-gold.

Suddenly, at the edge of the forest, from behind a small hillock, a red parasol appeared like an enormous toadstool. The parasol was unlike any which either Lidia or Alena possessed. Under it Clim saw the narrow back of a woman in a yellow blouse, and Liutov's bared, pointed head, with rumpled hair.

"Is this the woman whom my mother was asking about? Liutov's mistress? A final assignation?"

He drew so near that he heard the small even voice of the woman, and Liutov's terse questions. Then he started to turn into the forest, but Liutov shouted after him:

"I see you! Don't hide."

His shout rang out mockingly, and as Clim came up, Liutov met him, baring his teeth in an unpleasant grin.

"What makes you think I'm hiding?" he asked angrily, taking off his hat before the woman with intentional deliberation.

"Out of delicacy. Allow me to present you."

The woman extended her hand; its palm was very hard. Her face was the nondescript kind that one remembers with difficulty. She looked intently at Clim and murmured her name, which he immediately forgot.

"Do me a favour," Liutov said, turning around and making a face. "She has missed her train; put her up for the night at your place, but so that nobody knows about it. She's already been seen here; she had come to hire a house; but it isn't necessary that she be seen another time. Especially by this lame devil, this sharp-witted little *mouzhik*."

"Perhaps these precautions are superfluous?" said the woman in a low voice.

"I don't think so," snapped Liutov.

The woman smiled, prodding the sand with her parasol. Her smile was peculiar: before opening her tightly pursed lips she pressed them together even harder, in such a way that tiny wrinkles appeared at the corners of her mouth. It was a constrained, unpleasant smile, and it completely changed the expression of her face.

"Well, take a stroll," Liutov commanded, without helping her up from the ground. He took Clim's arm and they went off in the direction of the house.

"You aren't any too polite to her," Clim remarked glumly, indignant at Liutov's lack of ceremony in connection with her.

"'Twill pass," Liutov said.

"I must warn you that my brother has been arrested in Peterburg."

"*Narodopravetz?*" [36]

"A Marxist. What is a *narodopravetz?*"

Taking off his hat, Lutov began to fan his reddened face with it.

"'Again there is taking place an accumulation of revolutionary force,'" he mimicked somebody. "'Accumulation'—the devils!"

Samghin was angry at Liutov for drawing him into some kind of unpleasant and, it would seem, dangerous adventure; he was also angry at himself because he had so easily yielded; but won-

der and curiosity had the mastery over his anger. He listened in silence to Liutov's irritated chatter, and repeatedly turned to look over his shoulder. The woman with the red parasol had vanished.

"'Again there is taking place'! This person has come to me to inform me that a certain friend of mine has been arrested in Smolensk. He has a printing plant there — may the devil trounce him! There have been arrests in Kharkov, in Peter, in Orel. 'Accumulation'!"

He grumbled as Varavka did at his carpenters, stone masons and office clerks. Clim was struck by this strange tone, and still more by Liutov's acquaintance with revolutionaries. After listening to him for a minute or two he could not stand it any longer.

"But what have you to do with all this — with revolution?"

"A correct putting of the question," Liutov responded, smiling. "I regret that they pounced on your brother. He, now, would probably have answered you."

"Blockhead," Samghin mentally cursed. He pulled his arm away from his companion's, but the latter seemed not to notice as he walked with head thoughtfully downcast, scattering the pine cones with his feet. Clim quickened his steps.

"Where are you hurrying?" Liutov nodded his head in the direction of the house. "There's nobody there; they went off somewhere in a boat, to a fair."

He took Samghin's arm again, and, when they came up to a scattered cord of firewood, suggested:

"Let's sit down."

As soon as they were seated he began to jeer in a low voice:

"What the devil need have we of the intelligentsia, when our *mouzhik* is what he is? It's just the same as ornamenting village huts and mother-of-pearl. Splendour of soul, sincerity, romanticism, and all sorts of peppermints; the privilege of sitting in gaols, of living in the suicidal places one is exiled to, of writing

touching short stories and little articles. Great martyrs, of great worth, and so forth, and so forth. In general, uninvited guests."

He exhaled an odour of vodka, and as he talked he snapped his teeth as though he were biting threads.

"Take the *Narodsvaltzi,* for example. Why, it's nothing but a translation from the Mexican; it's Gustav Aimard and Mayne Reid. Their pistols shoot past the mark; their mines don't go off; their funy bombs blow up only one in ten — and then not in time."

Seizing a crooked, knotted log, Liutov tried to stand it upright on the sand, but did not succeed; the log kept falling down.

"It's as clear as clear can be that Russia must be hewn with an axe; it can't be sharpened with pen knives. What do you think?"

Samghin, caught unaware by the question, did not answer at once.

"The last time you talked about the Russian people altogether differently."

"About the people I always say the same thing: it's a splendid people! Incomparable!"

With unexpected strength he lightly tossed the log high in the air, and as it fell toward his feet, he seized it and stuck it in the sand.

"Out of this thingumbob one can make many different things. An artist would make either a devil or an angel out of it. But, as you see, the log has already started rotting as it lies here, yet it can still be burned in an oven. Rotting is useless and shameful; burning gives a certain quantity of warmth. Is my allegory comprehensible? I'm all for giving life warmth and light, all for making it red hot."

"You lie," thought Clim.

Liutov brandished his arms; the fingers of his right hand flick-

ered like the fingers of a deaf mute. His whole body jerked like a marionette upon its threads. He aroused in Clim an indignant protest.

"But what if I were to say that he's an actor, a trickster, a mad man, and that all his speeches are unwholesome, false and chattering? The question would arise: For what, for whom, does this fellow play his part and lie, when he is rich, in love, and the affianced husband of a beauty?"

"Just imagine!" Liutov's excited voice broke in upon Clim's meditation. "Just imagine that out of a hundred million of Russian brains and hearts, ten — or, say, five! — will work with all the might and the energy imprisoned in them?"

"Yes, of course," said Clim reluctantly.

The black sky was already starred; the air was thick with a dank warmth; it seemed that the forest was melting, spreading out in vapour; the dew was falling. In the dense darkness beyond the river, a yellow fire had flared up. It quickly burst into a bonfire, and illuminated the small white figure of a man. A measured plash of the water broke the silence.

"Our people coming," Clim remarked.

Liutov kept silent for a long while before he answered.

"It's time." He got up, looking about intently. "There's a little *mouzhik* wandering about here. I'll hold him back, but you go ahead, accommodate this lady."

As Samghin went off toward his house he heard Liutov's lively voice:

"Are you fishing for catfish in the forest, too?"

"You're laughing, Sir; but this catfish really was there."

"It was?"

"Sure enough!"

"Where?"

"Where else should it be but in the river?"

"This river?"

"Well, why not? It's a good river."

"He's an actor," Clim reflected, cocking his ear.

"You, Sir, Have you any need as regards women? There's a soldier's wife hereabouts."

"Real as the catfish?"

"She's very lonely."

"Varavka is right — he's a dangerous man," Samghin decided.

3

At home, after he had given orders to the servants to serve supper and then go to bed, Samghin went out on the terrace. He stood looking at the river, and at the golden blurs of light from the windows of Telepneva's house. He wanted to go there, but reminded himself that he must not, until the mysterious woman arrived.

"I've no will power. I should have refused him."

While he waited for the sound of steps over the sand, Clim tried to imagine Lidia conversing with Turoboev and Makarov. Liutov probably had gone there. Far off the thunder rumbled. The shattered sounds of a piano reached him. The moon lay hidden in the clouds above the river. At intervals it flooded the meadows with its veiled light. After waiting until midnight for his unwelcome guest, Clim shut the door with a crash and lay down to sleep, thinking that Liutov, probably, had not gone to see his fiancée, but was pleasantly passing the time in the forest with this woman who didn't know how to smile. Perhaps he had even invented all this about the *narodapravetz,* the printing plant and the arrests. "It's probably all very simple," he reflected balefully, "merely a final assignation."

Then he fell asleep, and was awakened in the morning by the

wind's whistling. The pines surged noisily beyond the window; the birches rustled; on the blueish canvas of the river tiny waves were curled up in a regular design. High above the river floated a deep-blue cloud; the wind tore at its edges, scattering fragments that careered rapidly over the river, darkening it with smoke-coloured shadows. Alena was shouting in the bath house. After Samghin had bathed, dressed and sat down to breakfast, a downpour suddenly burst, and a minute later Makarov walked in, shaking raindrops off his hair.

"But where is Vladimir?" he asked. "He didn't go to bed; his bed isn't rumpled."

Smiling, Clim tried to think of something caustic to say about Liutov; but before he had a chance to speak Alena rushed in.

"Clim, quick — some coffee!"

Her wet clothing clung to her flesh, outlining her naked body. She scattered water, squeezing it from her hair, and shouted:

"That crazy Lidka dashed for my place to get clothing; she'll be killed by the thunder!"

"Was Liutov at your place last night?" Makarov asked glumly.

Standing before a mirror, Alena spread out her hands.

"Well, now! It seems my fiancé has disappeared, and I'm going to have a cold and bronchitis. Clim, don't you dare look at me so shamelessly!"

"Yesterday the lame *mouzhik* was inviting Liutov to go to the mill," Clim said to the girl. She was already seated at the table, sipping her coffee and scalding herself in her haste. Makarov put down his half-emptied glass and walked up to the door leading to the terrace. As he stood there he began whistling softly.

"Will I catch a cold?" Alena asked.

Turoboev walked in, glanced at her casually, vanished, and

appeared again with his dusty coat, which he threw over her shoulders.

"It's a good rain," he remarked, "good for the harvest."

The lightning flashed; the thunder drummed; the panes in the windows tinkled; yet beyond the river, it was already growing lighter.

"I'm going to the mill," Makarov announced.

"There's a friend for you!" exclaimed Alena.

"Because he's not afraid of catching cold?" Clim asked.

"Why, even if but for that."

The overcoat slid off the girl's shoulders, revealing her bust, taut with the moist satin of her blouse drawn over it. This did not embarrass her, but Turoboev again drew the coat over her beautiful shoulders. Samghin saw that this pleased her. She shut her eyes, twitched her shoulders gaily and said:

"Don't bother; I feel hot."

"I'd never dare to do as that dandy does," Samghin reflected enviously. He turned to Turoboev and asked:

"Do you like Liutov?"

He noticed that Turoboev's cheek quivered as though it had been bitten by a fly. Taking out his cigarette case, he answered very politely:

"An interesting chap."

"I find interesting people the least sincere," Clim said. He suddenly felt that he was losing control of himself, and struggled to keep calm. "Interesting people resemble Indians in war dress—all painted, and in feathers. I always want to wash them and pluck out their feathers in order to see what the person really is like under all the decoration.

Alena walked up to the mirror and said with a sigh:

"Oh, what a scarecrow!"

Turoboev, as he lit a cigarette, looked at Clim questioningly,

and Samghin decided that he was taking so much time about lighting the cigarette because he did not want to speak.

"Listen, Clim," Alena said. "Could you restrain from your superior wisdom today? The day is spoiled even without you."

She said this in such a naïvely pleading tone that Turoboev began laughing softly. But this offended her. Quickly turning to Turoboev, she frowned:

"What are you laughing at? For Clim spoke the truth; only I didn't want to listen to it." She threatened him with her finger. "You too, probably, love all this — this war dress, these feathers?"

"*Mea culpa,*" Turoboev said, bowing his head. "You see, Samghin, not always appropriately, and almost always uselessly, pays people out in honest coppers. But then, is this copper of truth really so very honest? There exists an ancient custom: before pouring out a bell which summons us to the house of God, some sort of lie is bruited about. From this the copper, they say, becomes more canorous."

"So you're defending falsehood?" Samghin asked sternly.

Turoboev shrugged his shoulders.

"Not altogether that, but . . ."

"Alena, come on, let's change our clothes," Lidia shouted, appearing in the doorway. In a grey dress, in a turban made out of a towel, she resembled a Circassienne odalisque out of a picture.

Humming, Alena went away, and Clim got up and opened the door to the terrace. A wave of freshness and sunlight burst into the room. Turoboev's soft ironic voice had resurrected a feeling, experienced more than once before, of sharp dislike for this man with his little beard *à la Espagnol,* such as nobody else wore. Samghin knew that he could not cope with him in argumentation, yet he wanted to have the last word. Glancing through the window, he said:

"Swift, Voltaire and many others did not fear the truth."

"A contemporary German socialist—Bebel, for instance—is even braver. It seems to me that you comprehend very poorly the meaning of simplicity. There is a simplicity of St. Francis of Assisi, of the peasant wife, and of the negro of central Africa. And the simplicity of the anarchist Nechaev, which is not adaptable for Bebel."

Clim walked out onto the terrace. Drying in the hot sun, the wet floor boards steamed under his feet. He felt that in his voice, too, anger was steaming.

"You, yourself, talked about the peacock feathers of reason—Do you remember?" he asked, standing with his back to Turoboev, and heard the quiet answer:

"This isn't the same thing."

Turoboev lifted up his arms, putting them behind his head, and squeezed his fingers so hard that they crackled. Then, extending his legs, he slumped in his chair. Clim turned away. But a minute later, glancing into the room, he saw that Turoboev's pale face had changed unnaturally, had broadened out, as if he were clenching his jaws tight; his lips were painfully moving. With his eyebrows raised he was gazing at the ceiling, and Clim for the first time saw his cold eyes wearily submissive. It was as though an enemy had bent over this man, with whom he could not find the strength to struggle, and who would in any case inflict on him an overwhelming blow.

Makarov mounted to the terrace, saying angrily:

"Volodka, it turns out, has been drinking all night with the lame fellow, and now he's sleeping like a corpse."

Clim indicated Turoboev with his eyes; but the latter got up and went away, his shoulders slumped like an old man's.

"He's ill," said Clim quietly and not without malice. But Makarov, without looking at Turoboev, requested Clim:

"Don't you say anything to Alena."

Samghin was glad of an occasion to vent his spleen.

"It's you who ought to tell her. Pardon me, but your rôle in this love affair seems queer to me." He talked with his back toward Makarov. "I don't understand what binds you to this drunkard. He is only a man of straw, through whom glide only contradictory, appropriated words and ideas. He's just as much of a degenerate as Turoboev."

He talked for a long time, and it pleased him that his words had a calm and firm sound. Glancing over his shoulder at his comrade, he saw that Makarov sat with his legs crossed; a cigarette was between his teeth, as usual. He broke up a match box, laid the chips on the ash tray, lit them, and added matches to the little bonfire, watching each intently as it flared up.

When Clim stopped talking he said, without moving his eyes from the fire:

"To be a moralist is very simple."

The fire went out; those matches which had not been burned to the end were smouldering. There was no longer anything to light them with. Makarov dipped up some coffee from his glass and, with evident regret, drowned out the rest of the bonfire.

"Tell you what, Clim, Alena isn't sillier than I am. I play no rôle at all in her love affair. I don't love Liutov. I like Turoboev. And, frankly, I don't wish to have my attitude to people corrected by you, or by anybody else."

Makarov was talking calmly but in a very convincing voice. Clim looked at him in amazement; his comrade had suddenly appeared as a different man from the one Samghin had known up to that minute. Several days before, Elizaveta Spivak had also seemed a new person to him. What was the meaning of this? Makarov was for him one who had been confused by an unsuccessful attempt at suicide, a modest student who studied

sedulously, and an amusing youth who was still afraid of women.

"Don't be angry," said Makarov, stumbling against the leg of a chair as he started away. Clim, gazing at the river, was sunk in deep thought: What was the significance of all these changes in people, which he was noticing with ever greater frequency? He found an answer sufficiently soon, and one simple and clear: people tried on different masks in order to find one which would be most convenient and profitable. They hesitate, they dash about, they dispute with one another precisely in search of these masks, in a striving to conceal their lack of colour, their emptiness.

4

When the girls came out on the terrace, Clim met them with a superior smile.

"You see, Lidia," Alena said, nudging her friend. "He's safe and sound. And yet you're reproaching me for hard-heartedness. No, the slough is not for him, it's for me; it's he who'll drive me into the slough of deepest wisdom. Makarov, let's go—time to study!"

"How insuperable she is," Lidia said, looking after her friend and Makarov pensively. "And yet, she finds life hard."

Lidia was sitting on the window sill of the open window, with her back to the room and her face to the terrace; it was as if she were framed by the white jambs of the window. Her gypsy hair was loose; it fell over her cheeks and her shoulders and her hands, which were folded on her breast. From under her broad, gaily coloured skirt one could see her bare brown legs. Biting her lips, she said:

"Liutov is a very difficult chap. He, too, is fleeing from some-

thing; you know, he's living just so, on the run. He seems to be running even around Alena, somehow or other."

"He's been drinking all night at the mill, and now he's sleeping there," said Clim, sternly.

Looking at him closely, Lidia asked:

"Why are you angry? He drinks; but then, that's his hard luck. You know, it seems to me that we're all unhappy, and irreparably so. I especially feel this when there are a lot of people around me."

Swinging her heels against the wall, she smiled:

"Yesterday, at the fair, Liutov was reciting to the *mouzhiks* some verses of Nekrossov's. He reads amazingly well; not as beautifully as Alena, but remarkably well! They listened to him very closely, but afterward a bald old man asked: 'But d'yo know how to dance? I,' said he, 'take all of ye for funmakers from the theatres.' Makarov said: 'No, we're just ordinary folk.' 'What d'you mean — ordinary? There ain't any such thing as just ordinary folk.'"

"Not at all a foolish *mouzhik*," Samghin said.

"He said 'There ain't.' Why do they shorten their words?"

Clim did not reply. He listened, without giving any thought to what the girl was saying, and was yielding to a thoughtful mood. Her words 'We're all unhappy' had upset him, making him remember that he, too, was unhappy and lonely, and that no one wanted to understand him.

"And that evening and night, as we were riding home, we talked about our childhood."

"You and Turoboev?"

"Yes. And Alena. All of us. Constantine told us dreadful things about his mother, and about himself when he was little. It was so strange; everyone remembered about himself or herself, just as though it were about somebody else. How many superfluous things people live through!"

She talked softly, looking at Clim amiably, and it seemed to him that her dark eyes were expecting something, that they were questioning him about something. He suddenly felt an influx of a delectable, unfamiliar sense of self-forgetfulness. He fell on one knee, embraced the girl's legs, and pressed his face hard against them.

"Don't you dare!" Lidia exclaimed sternly, pushing his head away from her knees.

Clim Samghin said loudly and quite simply:

"I love you!"

Jumping down from the window sill she broke the ring of his fingers, and pushed her knees against his chest so hard that he almost tumbled over.

"'Pon my word of honour, Lidia."

She indignantly walked off.

"That's because I'm almost naked."

Halting on a step of the terrace, she exclaimed in an aggrieved voice:

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself. I was. . . ."

Without finishing her sentence, she ran down the stairs.

Clim leaned against the wall, struck by his weakness, which had so suddenly overwhelmed him and made him cast himself at her feet. He had never before experienced anything like it—that great joy which filled him during these moments. He feared that he might burst out crying with his joy and pride, because, at last, he had discovered within himself an emotion amazingly powerful, and, probably, natural only to him and inaccessible to others.

He passed the whole day under the mood brought about by his discovery, wandering through the forest, desiring to see nobody, and all the time saw himself on his knees before Lidia, embracing her warm limbs, and felt the satin of their

skin on his lips, on his cheeks, and heard again his voice declaring:

"I love you!"

"How well and how simply I said it. And probably I looked impressive at the time."

He was thinking only of himself at the minute, thinking as intently as though he were afraid he might forget the *motif* of a song he had heard for the first time, and which had moved him very deeply.

5

He met Lidia the next day, in the morning. She was going to the bath house, and he, having already bathed, was returning to his house. The girl suddenly appeared before him, as though she had come down out of the air. After exchanging a few words about the warm morning and the temperature of the water, she asked:

"Were you offended?"

"No," Clim answered sincerely.

"You mustn't be offended. Why, this is no child's game," Lidia said quietly.

"I know," he declared, just as sincerely.

Her kind voice did not surprise him, did not make him rejoice; she was bound to have said something of the kind. She might have said something even more endearing. Thinking about her, Clim felt certain that now, were he insistent, Lidia would yield to him. But he ought not to hurry. He must wait until she would come to feel, and would worthily appraise, that unusual thing which had happened to her.

Makarov, who had passed the night with Liutov at the mill, walked up to them. He asked whether Clim would care to go to the settlement — they were hoisting a church bell there.

"Of course I'm going!" Samghin answered gaily, and half an hour later he was walking along the bank of the river, under the bright sun. The sun, and her rather simple dress, made out of country linen, seductively emphasized the shameless beauty of Alena's perfect body. Keeping step with Turoboev, she and Makarov sang the duet from *Mascotte,* Turoboev prompting the words to them. Liutov walked arm in arm with Lidia, whispering something funny to her. Clim Samghin felt himself more mature than the five ahead of him, but somewhat weighed down with his individuality. He was thinking that it would be a good thing to take Lidia's arm, as Liutov had managed to do — to take her and, pressing his shoulder to hers, walk on with his eyes shut. As he watched Lidia's slender figure, enveloped in satin of a pearl shade, he was perplexed because he was not experiencing anything resembling those sensations which he had read of in the poets.

"I'm no romantic," he reminded himself.

He was somewhat alarmed by the complexity of the mood the girl aroused today, which was not in harmony with what he had experienced yesterday. Yesterday, and even an hour ago, he did not have any consciousness of dependence on her, and certain vague hopes had not appeared. Especially confusing were these hopes. Of course, Lidia would be his wife; of course, her love could not resemble Nekhaeva's hysterical passion; he was certain of that. But, besides this, there were fermenting within him still other expectations, desires and demands undefinable in words.

"She has caused this; she shall satisfy it," he calmed himself.

As they were entering the hamlet, built on the bend of the high, steep river bank, he concluded:

"One should not be so analytical."

6

The sun-flooded street of the hamlet was crowded with a motley throng of villagers and *mouzhiks* from the surrounding villages. The *mouzhiks* stood in silence, with bared heads — heads bald, shaggy, and anointed with oil; and from under the varicoloured calico bonnets of the country women rose, like unseen smoke, the softly sobbing little whispers of the prayers. It seemed that this hundred-voiced, muffled sobbing, with its sibilations emphasized, together with the odour of pitch, sweat, and roof-thatching growing fusty in the sun — all this seemed to be warming the air, transforming it into a steam invisible to the eye, into a fog in which it was difficult to breathe. People rose up on their toes; they craned their necks; their heads, rising and falling, swayed. Two or three hundred wide-open eyes were turned in one direction: upon the blue height of the clumsily built belfry, its ears empty, with a patch of the distant sky showing through them. It appeared to Clim that this patch was bluer and more vivid than the sky arched above the hamlet. The quiet hum of the crowd, increasing every moment, filled one with a tense expectation of a sudden explosion of thunderous cries.

Turoboev walked ahead, making his way through the thick crowd that gave way for him. The others followed after him in Indian file. As they drew closer to the belfry, the plaintive hum of the praying women receded, and the impressive voices of the clergy reading the mass became audible. In the center of a small circle made up of the motley figures of people stood a great bell weighing two hundred *pouds*. In a row in front of it were three other bells, each smaller than the next. The large bell, supported on stout trusses that had sunk deep into the soft soil, reminded Clim of the head of the fabulous giant in "Russlana"; the squat, grey-bearded, bronze-faced priest in his light paschel cassock

looked like the wizard Finn. The priest moved around the bells, chanting in a clear tenor and sprinkling the copper with holy water. Three coils of stout rope lay on the ground. The priest caught his foot in one of them, angrily swung up his aspersorium, and sprinkled the ropes with shiny drops of water.

Turoboev led them to the porch of the parochial school, just completed, with its windows as yet unframed. On the steps of the porch swarmed, shouted, and wept a mound of two and three-year-old children. A grey-eyed little hunchback, a young girl, was in command of this group of dirty little scrofulous bodies. She lorded it over them, crying out in a low voice, putting her arms and legs into action. On the upper step, her blue legs widely spread, revealing their veins in enormous knots, a blind old woman with a purple, bloated face was wheezing, whistlingly drawing in her breath.

"Take the birch to 'em, Gashka! Take the birch to 'em," she advised, shaking her large head. In her livid, blind eyes the sun was reflected as from the shards of a beer bottle. A police inspector appeared in the doorway, wiping his greyish moustache and his accurately clipped beard. His sharp reddish eyes scrutinized the vacationers. Catching sight of Turoboev, he quickly raised his hand to his brand new cap, and sternly ordered someone behind him:

"Chase the small fry away."

"No need of that."

"Sorry, but it can't be helped nohow, Igor Alexandrovich; they dirty up the building."

"I said there's no need of that," Turoboev softly reminded him, glancing into his heavily lined face. The police inspector drew himself up, threw out his chest so that his medals clinked, and, saluting him, repeated like an echo:

"No need of that."

He went down the steps, stepping over the children. In the doorway where he had stood appeared the lame *mouzhik* from the mill, grinning from ear to ear:

"Greetings!"

"Do you understand?" Liutov whispered to Clim, indicating the lame fellow with a wink. Clim had not understood anything. He and the girls stood as if they were chained to the spot, staring at the little hunchback as she quickly and dexterously dragged the children off the steps, clutching them with her small talon-like hands and almost throwing the half-naked bodies to the ground that was covered with small chips.

"Leave them alone!" Alena cried, stamping her foot. "They'll get all scratched up with the chips."

"Oh, Mother of God, Holy Virgi-in!" the blind woman said, gasping and wheezing. "Gashka, who be these newcomers, now?" She groped about her with trembling hands. "Whose voice was that? You bitch, wherever did you put my staff?"

Without listening either to Alena or to her, the little hunchback continued to drag off the children as a dog drags puppies. Lidia, with a shudder, turned her face away. Alena and Makarov started to seat the youngsters on the steps again; but the little girl, looking boldly at them with her sharp eyes, snapped:

"What makes you carry on so? These here little ones ain't yourn!" She went on pulling the children away from the steps. The lame fellow watched her, chuckling:

"Just you look! How stubborn the little monster is, eh?"

The girl's snarl confused Makarov. He smiled, and said to Alena.

"Leave her alone."

It seemed to Samghin that all of them were cowed by the little hunchback girl; they all seemed to have become submissive to her. Liutov spoke consolingly to Lidia. Turoboev, taking off a

glove, lit a cigarette. Alena tugged at his sleeve angrily, asking him:

"How can such things be?"

He smiled at her.

7

Two lads in stiff new blouses that seemed made of pink tin, as similar as two rams, came up and stopped near the porch. One of them glanced at the vacationers, walked up to the blind woman, took her by the arm, and said:

"Grandma Amphisa, make place for the gentry."

"Oh Lordy! Be they raisin' the bell already?"

"They're goin' to, right away. Move on."

"I have lived unto this day, glory be to thee, Holy Mother!"

"Just as if we had contagious diseases," Alena sneered.

Liutov questioned the lame fellow:

"But what faith do you belong to, then?"

Smiling, the lame fellow shook his head.

"No-o, ours is another faith."

"Christian?"

"Absolutely. Only — more strict."

"Then, you devil, tell us: in what way is it more strict?"

The lame fellow sighed mightily:

"That I can't tell. It can be told only to one of the same faith. We use bells, and all sorts of churchly things, and yet. . . ."

Clim Samghin, as he looked and listened, felt indignation rising within him. Everything around him was strange and interesting, but he was forced into a kind of dark corner and compelled to think of the hunchback girl, Alena's words, and the blind woman's question: "Who be these newcomers?"

In his head still hummed the whispered supplications of the country wives, confusing him, but not blurring his remembrance

of everything he had seen and heard. The mass came to an end. A tall hideously emaciated old grey-beard, with a yellow face and squash-shaped bald head, threw his sleeveless jacket from his shoulders and made the sign of the cross over himself three times, gazing up at the sky. Then he fell on his knees before the bell, kissed its rim and began walking on his knees around it, making the sign of the cross and putting his forehead against the depictions of the saints on the bell.

"That's the way!" approved the lame fellow. "That's Panov, Vasilich. It's he that's the benefactor of this settlement. He's a famous glass-maker — makes beer bottles for all the province."

It grew quieter on the square. Everybody was watching Panov closely as he crawled over the ground kissing the rim of the bell. Even on his knees he was tall. Someone cried out:

"Everybody! Divide in three parts!"

Another voice asked:

"But where's the blacksmith?"

Panov rose to his feet and studied the people silently for a while. Then he said in a deep voice:

"Fall to, ye Christians!"

The crowd, with an occasional shout, divided itself slowly into three sections. Two formed in an oblique line to the right and left of the belfry; the third moved away in a direct line from it; all three, bending over the ropes cautiously, as if they were strings of pearls, seemed to be strung on them. The ropes stretched from the ears of the large bell, but it seemed loath to let them go, drawing them ever more taut.

"Halt! Halt, all of ye!"

"There he is!"

"Well now, Nikolai Pavlich, come and serve God," Panov said loudly.

A broad-shouldered, squat *mouzhik* in a leather apron walked

up to him on bandy legs. His red hair stood straight up; his tangled beard was stuck in the collar of his striped linen blouse. With black hands he rolled his sleeves to his elbows, and, making the sign of the cross as he faced the church, bowed to the bells, without bending, but as if he were falling flat on his chest to the ground, throwing his long arms backward to keep his balance. Then, in the same manner, he bowed to the people in all four directions, took off his apron, carefully folded it, and placed it in the hands of a big brightly dressed country wife. All this he did silently, slowly, with an air of solemnity.

Several caps were extended to him. He took two of them, placed them well down on his forehead, and, holding them in place with his hand, fell on one knee. Five *mouzhiks,* raising the small bell from the ground, covered the head of the blacksmith with it in such a way that its edge rested on his caps and shoulders, on which the peasant woman had placed the folded apron. The blacksmith swayed, lifted his knee from the ground, rose slowly, and walked with broad steps to the entry of the belfry. The five *mouzhiks* accompanied him, walking side by side.

"He made it move all right, that idol!" The lame fellow sighed, scratching his chin. "But this here little bell is just about, you hear me, seventeen *pouds;* and then it must be carried up the stairs. Here, in this region, there's no one you could put up against this here smith. He beats 'em all. They did try to beat him up once, too. It took a whole crowd of people, of course, for that; even then it came to nought."

The crowd on the square was growing more and more quiet and tense. All heads were raised upward; all eyes were fixed expectantly on the half-ruined ear of the belfry, from which protruded at an angle three thick beams with blocks on them. Ropes were passed through the blocks and tied to the ears of the bell on

the ground. The inspector of police walked up to the large bell, slapped it with his palm as one slaps a horse, took off his cap, shielded his eyes with his other palm, and also began to gaze upward.

The tension deepened. Even the little urchins had stopped bustling about and, with their necks craned, seemed to be rooted to the ground.

There in the belfry's blue ear something shapeless began to stir; a cap flew from it, then another; then, like a clod, the rolled-up apron. The people on the ground shook themselves excitedly, and broke into a bedlam of shouts. The little lads began bouncing like rubber balls. A bald grey-moustached *mouzhik's* high-pitched squeal could be heard above the tumult:

"Mikolai Pavlich, my gossip! *Anperator* [Emperor]!"

The inspector put on his cap, adjusted the medals on his breast, and struck the *mouzhik* on the nape of his neck. The *mouzhik* jumped away and took to his heels. Halting at a distance, he stroked his head and said sadly, looking at the porch of the school:

"They won't even allow you to have your little joke!"

The blacksmith came down from the belfry and made the sign of the cross in the direction of the church. Panov, bending his body low, embraced him and kissed him:

"Thou mighty giant!"

He began to shout:

"Ye Christians! Go to it as one! God be with ye!"

The three groups of men holding the ropes bent forward, swayed, dug their feet into the earth, and threw themselves backward, like fishermen dragging in a net. The three grey ropes became taut in the air; the bell began to stir. It moved hesitatingly, and rose from the earth.

"More evenly, more evenly, children of God!" shouted the

maker of beer bottles in a deep voice, solemnly and with much concern.

Gleaming dully in the sun, the heavy copper bell moved upward slowly, and as they watched, the people also strained upward, as though they wished to follow the bell. Lidia noticed this.

"Look how they all stretch themselves; it's as if they were growing," she said softly. Makarov agreed:

"Yes. I, too, am being lifted up."

"You lie," Clim Samghin reflected.

It was still quiet in the square, except for a small boy's occasional shout, and the soft wailing of the infants at breast.

"More evenly, ye Christians!" Panov trumpeted, while the inspector of police repeated, not as loudly but more authoritatively:

"More evenly, there, you on the right!"

The three groups of people who were raising the bell groaned, sighed and growled. A block squeaked, and something was softly crackling in the belfry, but it seemed that all sounds were dying away and that now, at any minute, a solemn silence would fall. Clim felt that a pagan jubilation, tempestuous shouts, something amusing, would be more appropriate than silence at this time.

He saw that Lidia was looking at the people in the square, and not at the bell; she bit her lip and frowned angrily. A childlike curiosity shone in Alena's eyes. Turoboev was bored; he stood with his head inclined, softly blowing cigarette ashes from his sleeve. Makarov's face looked foolish, as it always did whenever he was thoughtful. Liutov stretched his neck to one side; his neck was long and sinewy, its skin rough-grained, like shagreen. He bent his head to his shoulder, in order to fix his divergent eyes on one point.

Suddenly, two-thirds of the way up to the belfry, the bell

quivered; through the air, with the swish, a burst rope snaked upward. The group of people on the left swayed; those in the rear tumbled in a heap. One great hysterical howl went up:

"Fa-ather in Heaven!"

The bell swung, its edge knocking slowly against the bricks of the belfry; fragments of lathe and the dust of whitewash rained down. Samghin blinked; it seemed to him he was growing blind from the dust. Alena screamed and stamped her feet.

"Eh, the devils!" Liutov muttered, smacking his lips.

"Hold on, ye Christians!" Panov roared, leaping backward, waving his arms.

The bandy-legged blacksmith ran back of the group that was pulling directly away from the belfry, and began winding the end of the rope around the thick trunk of a willow tree, close to the ground; one of the lads in a pink blouse helped him. The rope, tightening, quivered like a musical string. People jumped away from it. The blacksmith growled:

"Hold on! I'll kill you!"

Clim shut his eyes, expecting that at any moment the bell would crash to the ground. He heard the roaring, the squealing of the people; the growls of the blacksmith and Panov's trumpeting.

"Tie it up!"

"Fear not, ye Christians! E-easy! All together! Let 'er go!"

Once more the bell, almost imperceptibly, floated upward. The *mouzhiks* in the belfry thrust their heads out of the windows to watch.

"Home!" said Lidia abruptly. Her face was ashen; horror and revulsion were in her eyes. Somewhere in the corridor of the school Alena sobbed loudly, and Liutov was muttering. The howling laments of two country wives reached them from the square. Clim Samghin guessed that some moment had van-

ished out of his life without in any way having burdened his consciousness.

The lame fellow, having descended from the porch, was holding a frightened lad by the shoulder and questioning him:

"Well now — Is he living?"

"I don't know. Let me go, Uncle Mikhailo!"

"Idiot! You see, and yet you don't understand."

Turoboev stood under the willow tree, impressing something upon the inspector of police, shaking a white finger near the latter's nose. A priest carrying a cross in his hands hastened across the square toward the willow. The cross glowed, melted away, illuminating his dark face. Around the willow a dozen peasant women gathered in a close circle. When the priest came up, the inspector of police began pushing them away, and Samghin saw lying under the willow the lad in the pink blouse, and Makarov on his knees before him.

"How did this happen?" Clim asked quietly, looking about him.

Lidia was no longer on the porch.

She came out of the school, leading Alena by the arm; behind them was Liutov. Alena was sobbing:

"I didn't want to come here so much, yet you. . . ."

8

They hurried through the street of the hamlet without looking back. Beyond the paddock they caught up with the lame fellow. He immediately, with the assurance of an eye witness, began telling them:

"His neck, now, was caught by the rope. Well, the little spine-joints went and cracked."

Liutov shook his fist to the lame fellow and whispered:

"Keep still!"

After questioningly glancing at him, and at Clim, the lame fellow continued:

"Or it may be the blacksmith played a joke, put this here rope on him on purpose, now. Perhaps he even made a mistake; all sorts of things happen."

Liutov, holding him by the sleeve, began walking more slowly; but the girls, having come out on the river bank, also slackened their pace. Then Liutov began questioning the lame fellow again about his faith. Crickets filled the air with so great a noise that it seemed as if it was the sun-parched sky itself which was so stridulant. Clim Samghin felt as if he had just awakened from a nightmare, fatigued and indifferent to everything. The lame fellow hobbled in front of him, sententiously saying to Liutov:

"For instance: our faith doesn't accept anything that is made by the hand of man. The image at Spassov, which was made by the hand of man, we accept, but everything else we can't. For this image at Spassov — What is it made of? It's made of the sweat and blood of Christ. As Jesus Christ was bearing his cross on Golgotha, Thomas the Apostle, the doubting one, did wipe his dear face with a handcloth; he was fain to assure himself whether 'twas Christ or no. And so his dear face did remain on the cloth — 'twas he! But every other sort of icon is but falsehood, on the nature of your photography, say. . . ."

Liutov interrupted:

"Wait a minute. Why is my photography falsehood?"

"Why, what else should it be? Whose else is it, save yours? The *mouzhik,* now, what does he make? Cups, spoons, sleighs, and everything like that; whilst you make photographs and sewing-machines."

"Aha, so that's it?"

In Liutov's laughter, Clim caught a delighted squeal, such as is

made by a pampered lap dog when it is scratched behind the ears.

"Bread, for instance: it, too, isn't made by the hand of man; 'tis God gives it birth, and the soil."

"But what is dough kneaded with?"

"That's a woman's affair. A woman is far removed from God; for Him she's of the second quality. It wasn't she, now, that God created first."

Lidia looked over her shoulder at the lame fellow and walked on faster. Clim, glancing back at Liutov, thought, "He must be very bored if he diverts himself with such silly things."

"Where did you get that from? Where from? For you didn't think of it yourself, did you?" Liutov questioned the lame *mouzhik* animatedly, insistently, until the latter began to talk again, solemnly, in a measured voice.

"Not by myself; that's true. We all learn wisdom from one another. During the past year a gentleman lived here who had a habit of explaining things."

Clim reflected, "'A gentleman who had a habit of explaining things'? Very good!"

"So he used to hold converse with the people round about, at evening and on holidays. He was a man of firm mind! He used to say straight off: 'Where's the root and origin? It's the people,' says he, 'and for it,' says he, 'all means should be taken to. . . .'"

"You ought to have written him down for a mass. Did you?"

"You're joking. We forget to say mass for even our own dead."

"Well, and did he die?"

"That, I don't know."

Arriving at home, Samghin lay down. His head was beginning to ache; he could not think of anything, and had only one desire: that he forget this stupid day as soon as possible, that his

incongruous impressions which the day had brought be obliterated from his mind. A heavy drowsiness was overcoming him, yet he could not sleep; his temples throbbed. All the sounds of the days passed through his mind: the low whispered prayers of the country wives and their sighs; the commanding shouts, the frightened howling, the laments treading on the heels of death. He remembered how the little hunchback girl had indignantly asked: "What makes you carry on so?"

9

It was already dusk when Turoboev and Liutov arrived, and sat down on the terrace, continuing a conversation which evidently had been begun long ago. Samghin, lying inside, listened to the rise and fall of the two voices. It was strange to hear Liutov talking without the outcries and squeals so characteristic of him, and to hear Turoboev talk without irony. There was a clinking of teaspoons against glass; the water bubbled and steamed out of the cock of the samovar. Clim was reminded of his childhood, when, during the winter evenings, he used to fall asleep just before tea time, and would be wakened by this ringing of metal against glass.

Out on the terrace they were discussing Slavophiles and Danilevsky,[37] Hertzen and Lavrov. Clim Samghin was familiar with these writers, but their ideas were wholly foreign to his own. He found that all of them regarded personality merely as the material of history; to all of them man appeared an Isaac, condemned to a bloody sacrifice.

"It is necessary to have special heads and hearts in order to acknowledge the necessity of bringing man in sacrifice to the unknown god of the future," he reflected, as he listened carefully to Turoboev's calm and unhurried words:

"Among the ruling ideas there isn't a single one I find acceptable to myself."

Liutov began to mutter; at first it was impossible to make out what he was saying, but then some words became distinguishable.

"The *narodniki* have a strong advantage. The village is more healthy and practical than the city; it can create more steadfast people. Is that right?"

"That's possible," said Turoboev.

Clim reflected that, in answering, he had probably lifted his left shoulder, as he always did when he avoided giving a direct answer to a question.

"And yet, it's still the doing of things by halves!" shouted Liutov. "These are still the descendants of those dunderheads who, having given over the blessed South to the nomads, fled to the forests and the swamps of the North."

"Apparently, you're contradicting yourself."

"No; let me finish! How can *you* say such things, now? For it was your ancestors. . . ."

The chambermaid began walking about heavily; the tea things tinkled. Clim got up, noiselessly opened the window onto the terrace, and heard the slow, cold words:

"Of course, I don't think that my ancestors tangled up the history of the country to such an extent, and were so stupidly criminal, as is claimed by certain — manufacturers of truth among a few radical publicists. I don't consider my ancestors angels, nor am I inclined to consider them heroes. They were simply more or less submissive executors of the commands of history, which, as you yourself said, from the very beginning started off on a wrong track. I think it is now in such a state that it gives me, personally, the right to refuse the continuation of the line of my ancestors, a line demanding from a man certain qualities I don't possess."

"What! What is this?" Liutov piped. "What is this, — lackadaisicalness? Tolstoianism?"

"I remember telling you already that I consider myself a man psychically *declassé*."

Shuffling steps sounded on the terrace.

"Well, did he die?" Turoboev asked.

Makarov's voice answered him:

"Of course. Pour me some tea, Vladimir. Turoboev, you'd better talk some more to the inspector of police. He's accusing the smith now of accidental, instead of premeditated, murder."

Samghin left the window, brushed his hair, and walked out onto the terrace, judging that the girls would probably arrive soon.

The light of the lamp, as though it were swallowed up by the brass of the samovar, cast a shadowy light on three figures enveloped by the sultry darkness. Liutov, rocking in his chair, moved his lips silently as he watched Turoboev, who sat bent over the table, writing something on a crumpled envelope.

"Why are you barefoot?" Clim asked Makarov. The latter, walking up and down the terrace with a glass of tea in his hand, answered:

"My boots are bloody. This lad was so—"

"Well, that'll do!" Liutov said, frowning and sighing audibly. "But where are the creatures of the second quality?"

He stopped rocking and in a teasing voice began recounting to Makarov the lame *mouzhik's* opinion of women.

"The *mouzhik* said it more simply and briefly," Clim thought to himself. Liutov winked at him, Makarov, paused, pushed his glass onto the table so hastily that it fell off the saucer, and began animatedly:

"There! You see? For that's just what I say: it's organic! The myth about the creation of woman from the rib of man is an

evident falsehood, crudely and maliciously invented. For, in creating this lie, they knew that woman gives birth to man, and she gives him birth only for the sake of woman."

Turoboev raised his head and smiled into Makarov's eager face. Liutov, winking at him, said:

"A most interesting hypothesis of Russian fabrication!"

"Are you saying that about enmity toward woman?" Clim asked in ironic wonder.

"Yes, I," said Makarov, prodding his chest with a finger. He turned to Turoboev:

"The same enmity, too, is hidden in the myth about the expulsion of the first couple from the paradise of ignorance because of woman's wrongdoing."

Clim Samghin smiled. He wanted Turoboev to see his ironical smile; but the latter, leaning with his elbow against the table, was looking at Makarov's face, his delicate eyebrows raised high in apparent wonder.

"You're a happy infant, Kostiya," Liutov said, shaking his head, and began spreading the spilled water over the brass tray with his finger. But Makarov talked on, lowering his voice, and in his agitation stammering a bit:

"Enmity toward woman started from the moment when man felt that the culture created by woman was a coercion over his instincts."

"What is he drivelling about?" Samghin wondered, and became alert.

Makarov was standing with his feet close together, a posture that emphasized the wedge shape of his figure. He tossed his head; his streaked hair fell down over his forehead and cheeks. With a quick gesture of his hand he threw it back. His face became even more handsome as he talked animatedly.

"Woman initiated the settled—and through that very thing,

the cultured — life," he said. " It was she who was bound to fence in herself and her young from beasts, from inclement weather. She discovered edible plants and herbs; it was she who tamed animals. To the half-beast and vagabond who was her mate, she gradually appeared ever more mysterious and wise. Amazement and fear before woman has been preserved even down to our time in the taboos of the savage tribes. She threatened them with her knowledge, her seership, and especially by the mysterious act of bringing forth the young. Man, the hunter, could not observe how beasts bring forth. She was the priestess; she created the laws. Culture sprang from the matriarchate."

Around the lamp small grey moths flitted; their quick shadows glided over Makarov's white jacket; tiny black spots of shadows lay scattered over his breast and face, as if they were the shadows of his hurried words.

Clim Samghin thought that Makarov was talking stupidly and naïvely. " He's holding his examination for the position of 'a gentleman who has a habit of explaining things.' "

Reverting to an old habit, Makarov stood twisting the top button of his jacket as he spoke. With his other hand he tried to shoo away the moths.

" Incidentally, d'you know, Turoboev, for a long time now, a certain cynical oath has been offensive to me. Why? It seems to me that in profound antiquity it was a greeting through which blood relationship was established. And it might have been a device of self-defence. An old hunter would say: May your mother be taken by a younger, a more powerful man. Remember the meeting of Iliya Murometz with the flatterer? "

Liutov smiled and grunted.

" Where did you read that? " Clim asked, smiling too.

" That is my conjecture; I can't understand it otherwise,"

answered Makarov impatiently. Turoboev got up and stood listening intently to something as he said very softly:

"A witty conjecture."

"Have I bored you?" Makarov asked.

"Oh, no — what're you saying!" Turoboev assured him amiably. "I thought I heard the young ladies coming, but I was wrong."

"The lame fellow is walking about," Liutov said quietly. He jumped from his chair and descended cautiously from the terrace out into the darkness.

Clim had disliked hearing Turoboev style Makarov's conjecture witty. Now, as they both paced the terrace, Makarov kept on talking in a lowered voice, twisting his button and waving an arm.

"When the half-savage Adam deprived Eve, through the right of the strong, of power over life, he declared everything pertaining to woman an evil. It's very remarkable that this occurred in the East, from where all religions come. From the East comes the saying: Man is the day, sky, power and good; woman is the night, earth, weakness and evil. The Hebrews pray: 'Lord, I thank thee that thou has not created me a woman.' The vileness of our purefactory prayer after birth — that's indubitably masculine and priestly; but, having conquered woman, man could no longer conquer in himself the thirst for love and tenderness which had been nurtured in him by her."

"But more specifically, what is it you are trying to say?" Samghin asked sternly.

"I?"

"What are you leading up to?"

Makarov stopped before him, blinking as if he had been blinded.

"I want to understand just what contemporary woman is: the woman of Ibsen, who leaves love and her family? Does she feel

the necessity and the power to conquer again for herself her former importance as mother of mankind, as the motivating power of culture — a new culture? " He waved his hand in the direction of the darkness. " For this culture has already grown decrepit, has been lived through. There's something insane in it. I can't believe that the *bourgeois* vulgarity of our life has definitely distorted woman, although she has been made into a dummy on which to hang expensive dresses, gew-gaws and poetry. But there are women who do not want — understand this! — do not want love, or else scatter it about as something of no consequence."

Clim smiled at him.

" Oh, you romantic! " he said. Stretching himself and flexing his muscles, he went toward the staircase past Turoboev, who was thoughtfully looking at the face of his watch. The meaning of this long tirade had suddenly become perfectly clear to Samghin.

" The little fool," he was thinking, as he walked down the sandy path. A thin bright splinter of moonlight shone between the clouds; its silver light quivered on the spiked pine needles; the shadows of the trees lay in dark splotches about their feet. Samghin walked toward the river, assuring himself that he honestly felt repulsed by a tinsel glitter of words, and that he well knew what were the specious graces of human speeches.

" Thus do they live, all these Liutovs, Makarovs and Kutuzovs; they seize hold of a little idea, and then go around noisily beating drums about it."

10

In the morning a hot wind sprang up, shaking the pines, raising clouds of sand and lashing the grey water of the river. As Varavka walked bare-headed from the station, the wind tossed his beard over his shoulder and tugged at it. The beard gave Va-

ravka's red-faced, shaggy head a resemblance to a crude illustration of a comet in a popular book on astronomy.

At tea, sitting dressed only in his nightshirt which reached to his heels, his bare feet thrust into slippers, Varavka gasped from the heat and wiped the oily sweat from his face as he growled:

"Summer — the devil! *Afrikanische feierlich!* And over there that she-musician is rioting. She needs lumber-rooms, partitions, and the devil alone knows what else! Go over there, Brother, and calm her down. She's a tasty bit of femininity."

He sighed heavily and mopped his perspiring face with his beard. "It seems that things aren't going smoothly with Vera Petrovna in Peterburg, about Dmitri; he evidently is in a tight pinch. 'Tis a tribute levied by the times!"

Behind Varavka's back, Clim thought of him disrespectfully and sarcastically; but when he conversed with him he always felt that this man captivated him with his untameable energy and the clearness of his intellect. He realized that his intellect was cynical, but he remembered that Diogenes was, after all, an honest man.

"You know," he said. "Liutov sympathizes with the revolutionaries."

Varavka raised his eyebrows and reflected for a space.

"So. It's not a matter for the mercantile class, one might think. But then it seems to be coming into fashion. They sympathize." His words descended in a quick shower:

"A revolutionary is useful, too, if he isn't a fool. Even if he is foolish, he's useful because of the distorted conditions of Russian life. We, now, are forever creating more and more goods, but there's no purchaser, though potentially he exists to the number of a hundred millions. A match a day means a hundred million iron nails."

Gathering his beard in his hand, he tucked it inside the collar

of his nightshirt and drained his glass of milk. Then he snorted, tossed his head, and continued:

"If the revolutionary is persuading the peasant: 'Please, you fool, take the land from the landowner, and please learn how to live and work with human intelligence,' then the revolutionary is a useful fellow. What is Liutov? A *narodnik?* Hm! — A *narodovoletz.* I've heard these chaps have already fallen through."

"Is he giving you any money for the newspaper?"

"His uncle is, Radeëv. Such a benignant little ancient."

After a silence he narrowed his eyes and asked:

"Well now, this Liutov — Is he a man of his convictions?"

"I don't know. He's so — elusive."

"They'll catch him," Varavka promised, getting up. "Well, I'm going for a dip, and you scoot off to town."

"You're going for a dip?" Clim voiced his wonder. "You've drunk so much milk. . . ."

"And I'll drink some more," Varavka said, pouring cold milk into his glass from a pitcher.

XIV

1

UPON his arrival in the city, as he entered the courtyard of the house, Clim caught sight of Elizaveta Spivak sitting on the porch, dressed in a long apron of grey calico. She waved her arm, bare to the elbow, in greeting, and shouted:

"Ah, young master! Do come here!"

And, clasping his hand hard, she began complaining:

"One shouldn't rent out an apartment in which the doors creak, the window frames do not close, and the stoves smoke."

"There was a writer living here," Clim said, and was immediately horrified at the stupidity of his utterance. Madame Spivak glanced at him in wonder, thus confusing him even more, and invited him into the room. There a pock-marked girl with bold eyes was bustling about. In the middle of the room, sunk in thought, Spivak stood with a hammer in his hands; his coat was off, and on his breast the buckles of his braces glistened like two orders of honour.

"We're getting settled," he explained, extending to Clim the hand which held the hammer.

He took off his eyeglasses, revealing on his pathetic childish face blindly protuberant reddish eyes above their blue pillows. His wife led Clim through the rooms all piled up with furniture. She demanded carpenters and a man to repair the stoves. In her bare arms and calico apron she seemed less impressive. Clim, annoyed, glanced askance at her rounded abdomen.

But a few minutes later he had removed his jacket and was hammering nails into the walls, hanging pictures, and putting books on the cupboard shelves. Spivak was tuning the piano. Elizaveta said:

"He always tunes it himself. That's his altar. He won't even allow me to approach the instrument."

The bass strings hummed; the chambermaid clattered the dishes; the plumber's file rasped in the kitchen.

"Do you think certain things in life are superfluous?" Madame Spivak asked unexpectedly. But when Clim agreed with her, she narrowed her eyes, looked away from him, and said:

"Well, it's precisely the superfluous that I like. The necessary is boresome. It enslaves me. All these trunks, these suitcases—they're hŏrrible!"

Then she declared that she liked old porcelain, good book bindings, Rameau's and Mozart's music and the moments before a thunder storm: "When you feel that everything in you and around you is tense, and you expect a catastrophe."

Clim had never seen her so animated and imperious. Self-satisfaction looked from her eyes. But she had lost some of her beauty; yellowish blotches marred her face. She aroused in him a mingled feeling of caution and curiosity, and, of course, those hopes which agitate a young man when a handsome woman looks at him kindly and talks freely with him.

"Did I tell you that Kutuzov, too, has been arrested? Yes, in Samara, at a steamer-landing. He has a splendid voice, hasn't he?"

"He should be in grand opera, and not making revolutions," Clim declared staidly, and noticed the mocking twist of her lips.

"He wanted to. But probably at times one should fight a single very strong desire, in order to keep it from crowding out all others. What do you think?"

"I don't know," Clim said.

It was evident that she was testing him with her questions. She seemed to be measuring him with her eyes, the expression of which was so frankly appraising that it confused him. She stood with her ungainly abdomen thrust out, and fingered a tattered book with its binding torn off.

"You don't know? Haven't you thought about it?" she asked him, again. "You're an unresponsive mannequin! Is that because you're modest, or niggardly? I'd like to know—What's your attitude toward people?"

"No. She is not at all like the woman I met in Peterburg," Samghin reflected, evading with difficulty her persistent interrogation.

2

After working for more than an hour he departed, taking with him the disturbing image of a woman elusive in her thoughts and dangerous as are all inquisitive people. They question because they are impatient to form a conception of a man, and, in order to create it quickly, they circumscribe and distort his personality. Clim evolved this theory out of his own experience. He himself tried always to simplify people, and he suspected that they desired to simplify him, a man who did not feel the limits of his personality.

"One must be on his guard with this woman," he decided.

But on the next day, in the morning, he was again helping her to arrange her apartment. He went with the Spivaks to dine in the restaurant at the city park; in the evening he had tea with them. Later a moustached Pole with the proudly bulging eyes of a carp arrived bearing a violoncello. It appeared that he had come to see Spivak, whereupon that gentleman's indefatigable wife suggested that Clim show her the town. But as he was crossing

the yard to his room to change his clothes, she shouted to him from the window:

"I've changed my mind; I'm not going. Let's sit awhile in the garden. Would you like to?"

Clim did not wish to, but he could not make up his mind to refuse. For about half an hour they slowly paced the garden paths, talking of insignificant things. Clim sensed a strange tension, as though he were walking on the bank of a deep stream, seeking the most convenient spot to leap across it. The piano's chords, the sobbing of the violoncello and the sharp cries of the little musician came to them from the open window of the wing. The wind sighed and scattered a warm, blueish dust that seemed to sift down from the trees, duskily colouring the air.

Madame Spivak walked slowly, shifting her weight heavily from one foot to the other. But in her ungainly gait there was something proud and boastful, and again Clim reflected that she was self-satisfied. It was strange that he had not observed this trait before, in Peterburg; in her simple, conventional questions about Varavka and Vera Petrovna, Clim had not noticed an undue complacence. But now an indefinable consciousness of superior power emanated from her, making Clim timid in her presence. Her round feline eyes looked at him imperiously; their disconcerting gaze made him feel that she knew what he was thinking and what he might say. Moreover, she was forcing him to forget Lidia.

"Let's sit down," she proposed, and abstractedly began telling him that three days ago she and her husband had paid a visit to an old friend of his, a lawyer:

"Apparently he is a local patron of the arts and sciences. A red-headed chap there read something in the nature of a lecture—'Concerning the Instincts of Knowledge,' I think it was. No—'Concerning a Third Instinct'—but it was precisely the instinct

of knowledge. I am an ignoramus about philosophy, but it interested me. He demonstrated that knowledge is as great a force as love and hunger. I never heard it expressed in that way."

As she talked she seemed to be listening intently to her own words; her eyes stared down at her unshapely body. One felt that she was saying one thing while her mind was brooding on something else.

"An amazingly slovenly, hideous fellow. But when such unsuccessful people discuss love, I believe in their sincerity and in the profundity of their feeling. The best things I ever heard concerning love and woman were said by a hunchback." She sighed. "The more handsome a man, the less reliable as a husband and a father," she asserted, smiling. "Beauty is depraved. Probably that is one of nature's laws. She is stingy with beauty, and, when she creates it, tries to make it go as far as possible. Why are you so quiet?"

Samghin kept silent because he was expectant. Her remark startled him. He said quickly:

"The red-headed philosopher is my teacher."

"Yes? You don't say?" She glanced at Clim's face with curiosity.

He continued, as if it were unimportant:

"About twelve years ago he was in love with my mother."

He felt like a chattering urchin, and waited almost with fear for this woman's next question. But, after a silence, she said:

"It's raw out. Let's go in."

On the way to the wing she remarked in a low voice:

"You must be a very lonely fellow."

Her words did not sound like a question. For an instant Samghin felt grateful, then became still more alert.

The moustached Pole had gone, leaving his violoncello propped up near the piano. Spivak was playing a Bach fugue. He glanced

up at them through the dark rims of his eyeglasses, coughed, and said:

"He's no musician, but a plumber."

"You mean the violoncellist?"

"A perfect scoundrel," said the musician firmly.

He began to play again, but so strangely that Clim glanced at him in wonder. He played in a slowed-down tempo, emphasizing first one, then another, note of the chord; he lifted his left hand with its index finger extended and listened closely to the gradual melting away of the note. He seemed to be deliberately shattering and rending the music, searching for something deeply hidden in the melody, a melody which Clim knew well.

"Play something by Rameau," his wife requested.

Submissively he struck the naïve and gallant chords; they made the cosily arranged room even more snug.

Against the dark background of the walls the porcelain figurines stood out distinctly. Samghin reflected that Elizaveta Spivak was out of place here, that this room was intended for a dreamy blonde, of a lyric nature, enamoured of her husband and of poetry. Whereas this woman, placing some music in front of her husband, sang a flamboyant French bravura, ending it with the exultant cry:

"A toi, mon enfant!"

He was glad when the chambermaid appeared and announced, with a smile that was for some reason exultant, too:

"Your mother dear has arrived!"

Clim had expected his mother to arrive tired and irritated; it was therefore a pleasant surprise to see that she was in a wide-awake mood and seemed even to have grown younger during her absence. She immediately began discussing Dmitri. They would let him out soon, she said, but he could no longer study at the University.

"I don't consider this unfortunate for him; it has always seemed to me that he'd have made a poor doctor. By nature he's a teacher or a bank teller. The officer in charge of his case — a very amiable fellow — complained to me that Dmitri was discourteous during interrogations and refused to say who had drawn him into this adventure. He harmed himself very much through that. The officer is well-disposed toward the young people, but he says: 'Just put yourself in our position. Why, we can't be educating revolutionaries!' And he reminded me that in the year '81 it was the revolutionaries who killed the constitution."

His mother's eyes were very bright; one might have thought that she had touched them up a bit, or had resorted to just a drop of atropin. In a new gown of a fashionable cut, with a cigarette between her lips, she looked like an actress resting after a successful performance. She talked casually about Dmitri, in incomplete sentences, as though constantly forgetting about him.

"They allowed me to see him; he's sitting in a prison called The Crosses. He's in good health, has grown a beard, and is tranquil — even cheerful — and apparently considers himself a hero."

And once more she changed the subject.

"Peterburg refreshes one immensely. You know, I lived in it from my ninth year to my seventeenth, and I recalled so many lovely things."

With an enthusiasm unusual to her she went on for two or three minutes describing her early recollections of Peterburg. As he listened her son reflected disrespectfully that Peterburg, for the twenty-four years preceding this evening, must have been but a small, stupid town.

"Old Premirova and I found some mutual acquaintances. She's a fine little old lady. But her niece is dreadful! Is she always so rude and gloomy? She doesn't speak, but shoots with a blunderbuss. Ah, that reminds me — she gave me a letter for you."

Then she announced that she was going to take a bath, and started to leave, but stopped in the middle of the room.

"Oh my God, can you imagine it? Maria Romanovna — Do you remember her? — she was arrested, too. She was in jail for some time, and has just been sent out somewhere under police parole! Just think! why, she's about six years older than I am, and yet she — really, it seems to me that in this struggle against the government, in the case of people like Maria, the chief resentment is their desire to be avenged for their spoiled lives."

"That's possible," Clim agreed.

3

Nothing that his mother said affected him in the least. It was as though he had been seated near a window, and beyond the window a fine drizzle had been falling. Coming to himself, he opened the envelope, addressed in Marina's large handwriting. The envelope contained a letter from Nekhaeva. On thick blueish paper, ornamented with an exotic flower, she wrote that her health was improving and that perhaps toward the middle of summer she would arrive in Russia.

"What next?" reflected Samghin in vexation.

Nekhaeva's letter was written in a literary style that gave her words the effect of having been studied over and carefully selected.

"She must think she is Maria Bashkirtzeva," Clim said to himself derisively. He tore up the letter, undressed himself, and went to bed, reflecting that in the final upshot people only wore one out. Every one of them, throwing a heavy shadow on the memory, forced one to think of him or her, to evaluate, to seek out a place for him or her in one's soul. And where was the necessity, and the meaning, of it all?

"It's these disturbances from the outside that interfere with my establishing my own individuality firmly," he decided, contradicting himself. "As a result, I am noticed only because I stand apart from everybody and keep silent. It is necessary to adapt some idea and enlarge upon it, as Tomilin, Makarov and Kutuzov have done. One must have in one's soul a flagpole, around which will be formed all that will separate his own personality from all others, that will draw a sharp line about him. Definiteness of personality is attained by a man's saying always the same thing — that is clear. Individuality is a mass of well-digested opinions; it is simply an original vocabulary."

But as he considered all the ideas with which he was familiar, Clim Samghin could not find one which was adaptable to him; nor could he have found it. Here was not a matter of appropriating another's material, but of inventing one's own. All ideas were bad, if only because they were someone else's; to say nothing of the fact that many of them were organically unsuitable, while others were almost amusingly naïve — as, for instance, Makarov's ideas.

This thought, and the shrill buzzing of mosquitoes outside the cheese-cloth curtains of his bed prevented him from falling asleep. Clim Samghin tried to become calm, reminding himself that actually he did have a flagpole: his honest attitude toward his own self. Extraneous things were not absorbed in him, were not incorporated in his growth, but floated past without disturbing his emotions, merely burdening his memory, all for the reason that in him there was a revulsion against any sort of self-coercion. But this was no longer consoling. From hopeless and fatiguing search for a convenient vestment, he passed on to thoughts about Elizaveta Spivak and Lidia. They were both almost equally unpleasant in that they were seeking for something within him, rummaging through him. In this respect their attitudes toward him were the

same. But both of them attracted him. With an equal force? That question he could not answer. That, it seemed, depended upon their position in space, upon their physical proximity to him. In the presence of Elizaveta Spivak, Lidia's image blurred and melted away; whereas when Lidia was before his eyes the older woman vanished. And the worst of all was that Clim could not clearly imagine exactly what he desired from the pregnant woman and from the as yet untempted girl. He had not forgotten the emotion with which he had embraced Lidia's legs, but he remembered it as a vision seen in a dream. During the several days that had passed since then he had more than once asked himself what had compelled him to get down on his knees before her and no other. The questions awakened doubts in him as to the actual power of the emotion which he had been so proud of several days ago.

With ever greater frequency past events were assuming in his mind the character of a dream. What was the need for the stupid scene of harpooning the imaginary catfish? What significance was there in Liutov's and the lame *mouzhik's* incongruous laughter? There was no need of viewing the oppressive fuss about the church bell, and much else that, having no significance, merely burdened down the memory.

"What makes you carry on so?"—the hunchbacked girl's indignant question rang in his memory, and the sobbing whisper of the country wives' prayers noised through his head. "Really, it seems I'll get sick from all this."

It was already growing light; the shadows on the moonlit floor had vanished; the panes of the windows lost their blueish tinge and seemed to have dissolved. Clim dozed off, but was soon awakened by the broken trampling of many men and the clanking of iron. He jumped up and walked to the window. Through the street was passing the usual procession of convicts, a large

gang surrounded by a chain of soldiers belonging to a squad assigned to convict transport. A janitor with a pointed beard, scraping his broom over stones, raised up clouds of dust against this gang of drab-clad people. The soldiers were small in stature. Their uniforms were decorated with blue cords; their naked sabres, too, had a blue glitter, like ice. At the head of the gang, clanking their chains, walked a group of tall, grey-clothed men handcuffed together in pairs. Most of them were bearded, their heads were smooth shaven, and all were as large as if they had been especially picked for size. The face of one of them was half hidden under a black bandage which covered one eye. With his other eye he glanced up at the window where Clim was, and said to his comrade, a bearded fellow who looked exactly like him:

"Look! Lazarus is risen from the dead!"

But his comrade, looking into the distance, made no response other than turning his glance downward and spitting deliberately at a guard's boot. Those were the only words Clim heard through the muffled tramp of a hundred feet and the clanging of chains, which broke the dawn silence of the slumbering town.

Clattering along behind the men in prison garb came a motley company in all sorts of garments, with bundles under their arms, with wallets on their backs. A tall old man clad in an undercassock and a quilted jacket trudged along with a tea kettle dangling from his belt. His utensils clanked in time with his leg-irons.

These "politicals" marched along in a close group. There were some twenty of them. Two wore glasses; one was red-headed, unshaven; another was grey, resembling the icon of Nikolai Mirlikiisky.[38] Behind them waddled an elderly man with long moustaches and a red nose. Smiling, he pointed his finger at the windows of the slumbering houses and said something to a curly-headed lad who walked by his side. Four women brought up the procession. One was stout, with the flabby face of a nun; another,

a rather young woman, graceful, with slim legs. The two others walked arm in arm; one of them, limping, rocked from side to side. Behind her a snub-nosed soldier sleepily plodded along on heavy feet. The blue blade of his sabre almost touched her ear.

As the soldier heading this party came abreast of the janitor, he stopped working; but as soon as the guard had passed, quickly began raising dust around the political prisoners with his broom.

"Wait, you blockhead!" the guard turned his head and shouted. He stumbled and sneezed.

As the gang turned into a street which descended to the river, the janitor drove clouds of smoky dust after them. Clim knew that the prisoners were being awaited on the river by a rusty steamer with a white stripe on its smoke stack — a decrepit old barge, its deck covered with an iron cage that looked like a huge mouse-trap. It was possible that his brother, Dmitri, would also ride off in such a mouse-trap. Why had he become a revolutionist, this brother of his? In his childhood he had been colourless. Though with grown-ups he sometimes revealed a calm, unbending stubbornness, in his games with other children he showed the good nature of a house dog. Nekhaeva was right when she declared that he was an ignoramus. Then, too, his body was unwieldy — not at all an adroit body. A revolutionist must be dexterous, clever, and wicked.

In the distance one could still hear the dismal clanging of chains. The janitor had swept his plat, knocked the handle of his broom against the cobble stones, and made the sign of the cross, gazing into the sky where the sun had now risen. Quiet fell. One might have thought that the janitor with the pointed beard had swept the prisoners out of the street, out of the city. And this, too, was like a depressing vision seen in a dream.

4

Toward evening, in the dark shop of a dealer in second-hand books, Clim stumbled against a man in an autumn topcoat.

"Excuse me!"

"Why, you're Samghin," the man said.

Even then Clim did not immediately recognize Tomilin in the dusty gloom of the shop that was crowded with books. From his place in a very low chair, the legs of which had been cut down, the philosopher extended a hand to Samghin. With the other hand he picked up his hat from the floor.

"Let's go to my place, Samghin." He arose and called out to some person unseen:

"A rouble-thirty is enough!" Clim, confused by this unwished-for meeting, did not manage to decline the invitation. Tomilin revealed a haste unusual for him.

"When one pokes about in books, time flows by unnoticed; I'm going to be late for tea," he said, blinking in the bright sunlight as they came out into the street. In a wrinkled hat and an overcoat much too large for him he looked like a bankrupt merchant who had been in prison for a long time and had just come out of it. He walked along pompously, like a goose, with his hands in his pockets. The long sleeves of his overcoat wrinkled into deep folds. His sallow cheeks had taken on a well-fed plumpness. His voice was assured. In his speech Clim caught the stern tone of the preceptor. As they went up the steps to his house he turned to Clim with a skeptical smile:

"Well, now, do you find the learning of the university satisfactory?"

Before Clim could answer, Tomilin introduced the cook's wife, Varvara Sergeëvna, who came into the entry and respectfully helped him remove his overcoat.

When his overcoat was off he was seen to be wearing a jacket and a starched shirt with yellow spots on the bosom. A butterfly bow tie, bright lavender in color, protruded from under his short-clipped beard. His hair, too, had been clipped. It was parted in the middle, and lay over his head like a nightcap. Tomilin's face had lost its resemblance to an image of Christ. But his china-like eyes had remained immobile, and as always his bristling red eyebrows were drawn together in a frown.

"Partake of the refreshments, if you please," the woman invited persuasively, in a voice that was as sweet as pastry. She pushed toward Clim a glass of tea, cream, a jar of honey and a disk of cakes which were the colour of iron rust.

"Remarkable cakes," Tomilin testified. "She makes them herself out of malt and honey."

Clim ate in order to avoid talking. Unnoticed, he scrutinized the tidy room, with flowers on the window sills, images in the right-hand corner, and an oleograph on the wall. The latter depicted a healthy-looking woman standing near a column with a tambourine in her hand. The living woman, seated at the table, seemed sated for all her life to come. Her large overfed body was planted in the chair with monumental solidity; her raspberry-coloured lips moved incessantly; her fat purple-veined cheeks puffed out as she breathed; her double chin quivered, and her breasts heaved. Her watery eyes had a good-natured, satisfied look, and whenever she stopped chewing her little mouth closed into the form of a star. Her pink hands wavered benevolently over the table, noiselessly shifting the tea things. These magnificent hands, with fingers like sausages, seemed to have a magnetic quality: they had only to be stretched toward the sugar bowl or the cream pitcher, and lo! these articles moved like trained animals toward her soft fingers. The samovar beamed at her with a coppery, understanding smile; everything in the room seemed to be regarding her expectantly,

awaiting her soft touches. There was something irreconcilable, depressing, and even fantastic in the fact that in the presence of this woman, in this room saturated with an aroma of geraniums and edible things, one should hear a scornful psychologic harangue:

"The materialists assert that the psyche is verily a property of organized matter, that thought is a chemical reaction. But then this is merely a terminological distinction from hylozoism, from the animation of matter," Tomilin declaimed, holding in his hand a cake and waving it about like an orchestra conductor's baton. "Of all the unallowable simplifications, materialism is the most hideous. And it is perfectly obvious that it is derived from the despair brought about by ignorance and the weariness of unfruitful searchings after faith."

He dropped the cake on a plate and shook a threatening finger as he exclaimed solemnly:

"I repeat: it is faith that they seek, and consolation, but not truth! And I demand: purify thyself not only from all beliefs, but even from the very desire to believe!"

"Your tea will get cold," the woman remarked.

Tomilin glanced at the wall-clock and hurried out of the room. The woman reassured Clim:

"He'll be back right away; he's gone after the cat. You see, his studious occupation demands quiet. I even poisoned my husband's dog with arsenic; the beast used to howl too much on moonlight nights. Now we keep a cat that we call Nekita. I love to have a four-legged creature in the house."

She paused to adjust the pins in her heavy turban of dark hair.

"His studious occupation is a hard one! What thousands of words a body has to know! For there he sits, copying them out, copying them out of all kinds of books—so many there's no counting them, these books!"

A tame siskin, gray and yellow, flitted about the room as if it were the spirit of the house. It perched on the flowers and it pecked at their petals; swayed on a slender little twig, fluttering its leaves. Suddenly frightened by a wasp which was buzzing angrily and beating against the glass, it flew into its cage and began to drink, turning its odd little beak up high with each swallow.

Tomilin came in, tenderly carrying a black cat with green eyes. He seated it in the woman's ample lap and asked:

"Should we give him some milk, perhaps?"

"It's too early," the woman said, looking up at the clock. A minute later, Clim heard again:

"The universe of free thoughts will follow me. Faith — that's a crime before the visage of thought."

As he talked, Tomilin made sweeping gestures with both hands, as if he were parting something. His voice had a commanding ring, his eyes a stern glitter. Clim watched him in wonder and envy. How quickly and decidedly people changed! And he was still acting the debasing rôle of a man whom everybody considered a dust-bin for the rubbish of his own opinions. As Clim was leaving, Tomilin said to him insistently:

"Come more often — do!"

The woman squeezed his hand warmly with one of her own, while with the other she seemed to pick something from the skirt of his jacket, and, hiding it behind her back, said, smiling broadly:

"Now he's bound to come. I put cat-fur on him."

In answer to Clim's question as to just what she meant by putting cat-fur on him," she explained:

"Well, you see, tomcats are very much attached to the house, and there's about 'em a power to attract people. So if some man who's liked in the house does but carry away on him a bit of cat-fur, that will absolutely draw him back."

"What bosh!" Clim reflected, walking through the street, but he carefully inspected the sleeves of his jacket and his trousers — Where was this bit of cat-fur fastened to him? "How vulgar," he kept repeating to himself, vaguely sensing the need of convincing himself that this state of well-being was vulgar, and nothing but vulgar. "Actually, Tomilin is preaching a simplification that is the same as that of the materialists whom he inveighs against," Clim decided and even tried to find something in common between the philosopher and the black, green-eyed tomcat. "The tomcat should have gobbled up the siskin," he smiled. His head was buzzing. "It seems that I have poisoned myself with those iron cookies!"

5

At home, he found his mother in earnest conversation with Madame Spivak. They were sitting in the dining-room, near the window which opened into the garden. His mother handed Clim a telegram, and said quickly:

"Uncle Jacob is dead." Throwing her cigarette out of the window she added: "He died without having left the prison, after all. It's terrible!" She paused again, then went on: "That was merciless on the part of those in power. It doesn't matter to them that a man is dying — they keep him in prison just the same."

Clim felt that his mother talked with great effort, as though embarrassed before her guest. Madame Spivak looked at her with a sympathetic expression, but evidently did not consider it appropriate to express condolences. After a little while she went away. Clim's mother, when she had seen her to the door, said patronizingly:

"She is an interesting woman. And business-like. One feels at ease with her. She arranged her rooms very charmingly and with much taste."

Clim thought that she had been too abrupt about Uncle Jacob. In an attempt to show more feeling for the dead, he asked:

"Have they buried him?"

His mother looked at him in surprise.

"Why, it says in the telegram: 'Died on the thirteenth and buried yesterday'!"

She turned to a mirror and, squinting her eyes to inspect a little pimple near her ear, she said:

"I must write about this to Ivan Akimovich at once. Do you know where he is? In Hamburg?"

"I don't know."

"Has it been a long time since you wrote him?"

Clim felt a vague irritation, the reason for which was not clear even to himself.

"A long time ago," he answered. "I confess that I write to him rarely. He answers me with aphorisms as to how one should live, think and believe. He recommends books — undistinguished things like Prugavin's *On the Demands of the People and the Obligations of the Intelligentsia.* His letters seem to me the most naïve rhetoric, completely out of place in connection with a trade in oakum. He wants me to inherit the mental habits which he himself has probably rejected already."

"Yes," Clim's mother said, powdering the small pimple. "He was always fond of rhetoric. Rhetoric, above everything. But — Why are you so nervous today? Even your ears are red!"

"I don't feel well," Clim said.

That evening he lay in bed with a cold pack on his head, listening to the doctor who said reassuringly:

"Some gastric disturbance. We'll see tomorrow."

6

For the space of five weeks Dr. Lubomudrov could not definitely diagnose the patient's illness, and Clim could not decide whether he was ill physically or simply showing the effects of a spiritual sickness due to a revulsion against life and people. He was no hypochondriac, but sometimes it seemed to him that there was at work in his body some sharp acid, warming his muscles, steaming the life force out of them. A heavy fog filled his head; he longed for deep slumber, but was tortured by insomnia and a tingling of the nerves. Through his memory ran disconnected recollections of things, people, and phrases:

"But was there really a boy? Perhaps there wasn't any boy at all."

"What makes you carry on so?"

"Before God a woman is a creature of the second quality. . . ."

All these words floated constantly before his eyes, as though they were written in the air. In them there was something dead and irritating. They did not stimulate him mentally; only increased his state of ill-being.

Sometimes Clim Samghin would suddenly imagine himself almost well, and would take a trip to the country house; but on his way there, or when he was already there, he would be plunged again into a state of general debilitation. He did not want to see people; it was unpleasant to hear their voices. He knew beforehand exactly what was going to be said by his mother, Varavka, the indecisive doctor, the yellow-faced, flannel-clad fellow in the seat next to him on the train, and by the dirty oiler, with a long-handled hammer in his hand. People irritated him if for no other reason than the fact that they existed, moved, gazed and talked. Every one of them violated the imagination, compelling him to think: Just why was it necessary for him or her to be alive? Incon-

gruous questions sprang up: Why did that chap with the high cheek-bones shave his beard? Why did the other carry a cane, when his legs were strong and graceful? There went a woman who had painted her lips brightly, and had underlined her eyes. Because of this her nose seemed bloodless, grey, and out of all proportion to the face. Yet no one cared to tell her that she had spoiled her face. Clim himself did not care to. Keenly and eagerly he noticed everything ugly about men and women, also everything ridiculous and repulsive which was in them; thus he was enabled to regard everyone with contempt and dislike. But at the same time he vaguely sensed that these, his cleverest mental devices, were unwholesome, unsound and impotent, and felt that their repetitious similarity was fatiguing him more and more.

Sometimes it seemed to Samghin that his storehouse for all impressions — that which is called the mind — was cluttered up with these superficial clevernesses and with everything else that he knew and said, cluttered up for all his life, so that there was no room left. He felt that he would no longer be able to learn anything from the outside, but must merely unwind the tightly rolled skein of memory and gaze helplessly upon what he had lived through. It would have brought happiness to unwind the skein to its end. But immediately following this feeling there would flare up and stir within him a contradictory desire to increase this skein to its utmost limits, so that it would fill everything within him, all his void, and finally give birth to some powerful, insolent emotion that would empower Clim Samghin to cry out to all men:

"I say! I do not know anything, do not understand anything, do not believe in anything; and now I am telling you this honestly! But all of you who pretend to believe are liars; you are lackeys of the simplest truths which are no truths at all, but only

lumber, rubbish, broken-up furniture and chairs with their seats worn through."

As he imagined himself speaking these words, which in reality he had neither the spirit nor the power to utter, Clim recalled how once in his childhood he had unexpectedly opened the door of a storeroom cluttered with chaotic piles of things which had outlived their day.

7

During the first days of Clim's undefinable illness, Liutov, with his fiancée, and Turoboev and Lidia, had gone away on a steamer down the Volga to the Caucasus, planning to return to Moscow in the fall after a trip to Crimea. Clim regarded this trip with so much indifference that he reflected:

"I am not jealous. I am not afraid of Turoboev. Lidia is not for him."

Varavka's summer cottages were occupied by strangers with a multitude of squawling children. Of mornings the river, disturbed by bathers, splashed resoundingly against the shore and the bath-house walls; human heads bobbed up and down like corks in the blueish water; wet, shiny arms waved in the air. At evening, in the forest, *gymnasium* boys and girls sang songs. Every day at three o'clock a thin flat-breasted girl who wore a pink dress and round dark glasses played the "Maiden's Prayer" on the piano; at four o'clock she could be seen walking along the river bank on her way to the mill to drink milk, the pink reflection of her dress following her obliquely in the water. Wherever she went she left the stifling scent of tuberoses trailing after her. A long-legged teacher from a normal school ran along, insanely swinging a butterfly net. The lame *mouzhik* hobbled over the ground, seemingly possessed of a miraculous ability to appear simultaneously in different places. Gaily garbed gypsy women

wandered about and offered to fathom the future as they stole linen, chickens, and children's toys.

Dr. Lubomudrov lived in one of the cottages below Varavka's house. On holidays, immediately after dinner, he would seat himself at a table with his stout wife and two men — the teacher and Alena's guardian. The three men were quiet creatures. But the doctor's wife could be heard crying out constantly in a grating voice:

"Hearts are trumps, I say! Still, I'll stick firmly to diamonds! No, I'll maintain my point — the deuce of hearts!"

Occasionally one heard the doctor's hesitating voice; he would be saying something serious:

"Only the English have attained the ideal of political liberty." In the same tone, he would advise:

"Eat more vegetables, and especially those that contain nitre, such as onions, garlic, horseradish, radishes. Sugar beets, too, are helpful, although they do not contain any nitre. Did you say the deuce of clubs?"

On holidays flocks of little boys put in their appearance from the settlement. Perching themselves on the river bank like queer birds, they quietly observed the care-free life of the vacationers. One of these little lads, who had quick darting eyes, and a head covered with black curls, was called Lavrushka. He was an orphan, and, according to the stories of the servants, was considered remarkable because he devoured fledgelings alive.

Varavka talked on and on, filling the patient air with his usual paradoxes. Clim's mother came up occasionally, bringing with her Elizaveta Spivak. Varavka was very attentive to the musician's wife and openly admired her. She smiled at him pleasantly, but her friendship with Clim's mother was increasing constantly, as Clim could see.

Varavka would complain:

"She's much too inquisitive. She wants to know everything, even steamboating and forestry. A bookworm. Books spoil women. This winter I met a musical comedy actress, and she suddenly asked me: 'To what extent is Ibsen indebted to Nietzsche?' Why, the devil alone knows which is dependent on which! I try to steer clear of fools. The other day the governor says to me that I'm compromising myself by giving work to people who are under political surveillance. I says to him: 'Excellency! They do their work honestly!' But says he: 'Can it be,' says he, 'that in our Russia there are no longer any honest people who are not under suspicion?'"

Varavka's feet hurt him; he began using a cane when he walked. Ivan Dronov strolled over the sand with his crooked legs, gazing, like an Ishmaelite, at the grown-ups and the children. He bandied curses with the chambermaids and cooks. Varavka had placed on him the onerous duty of listening attentively to the endless whims and demands of the vacationers. Dronov heard them to the end, and every evening came to Varavka with a report. The latter listened faithfully to the dismal enumeration of complaints and grievances, and asked, smiling into his beard:

"Well, now, did you promise them to do all that?"

"I did."

"Well, they'll have to be satisfied with that. Just remember, all these people are here for only a short while; after another five or six weeks they'll all be gone. One can promise them everything, but they'll get along without any changes!"

Varavka burst into peals of laughter, his belly shaking. Dronov walked off to the mill, to guzzle beer there until midnight with the gay country women. He tried occasionally to chat with Clim, but Samghin met his attempts coldly.

During all this time, Inokov came twice. His face was hungry

and austere. For a whole evening he talked coarsely and angrily about monasteries, cursing the monks.

"The Catholics gave us Campanella, Mendel, and many scholars and historians; but our monks are leaden ignoramuses; they can't even write a mediocre history of the Russian sects."

He would ask Elizaveta Spivak:

"And why are the sects of those professing the Jewish faith so numerous only with us and with the Magyars?"

"An original chap," she called him, and Varavka offered him work in his office. But Inokov, without having thanked him, refused.

"No. I have to study."

"But what are you studying?"

Inokov's ludicrous answer was uttered without a smile:

"How to live one's life."

On that same evening he disappeared as completely and suddenly as a stone fallen into a river.

8

Clim Samghin could not understand at all his own attitude toward Elizaveta Spivak, and this made him angry. Sometimes he believed she was complicating his confused mental state and intensifying his illness. He was both attracted and repelled by her. In the depth of her feline eyes, in the center of each pupil, he had noticed a cold little needle-point of light. It pricked him mockingly, and perhaps evilly. He felt certain that this woman with her swollen abdomen was searching for something in him, that she desired something from him.

"Yours is a critical mind," she would say amiably. "You are a man well read. Why aren't you trying to write, eh? In the

beginning, book reviews, and then, when you have caught the knack of it. — Incidentally, your foster father is going to publish a paper, beginning the first of the year."

"Why is it necessary for her to want me to write book reviews?" Clim would ask himself, smiling feebly at his own querulousness.

On those days when an insuperable boredom compelled him to leave the country house and go to town, the evening would find him sitting in the wing of the house listening to Spivak at his piano — absurd little Spivak, of whom Varavka had said: "He's a character out of a musical comedy."

The little musician's fingers on the piano keys told of the tragic agitation of Beethoven's genial soul, of the prayers of Bach, of Mozart's strange sad beauty. Elizaveta Spivak, absorbed, sewed tiny frocks and diapers for her unborn child. The music intoxicated Clim, but it could not submerge his fruitless imaginings of what might have been if everything around him had been different.

Sometimes he would be seized by a desire to be in Spivak's place, with Lidia as his wife. Elizaveta might then remain with them, were she not pregnant and were she to lose her outrageous habit of asking questions.

"What is your interpretation of this?" she would ask him, and it always turned out that Clim's interpretation was not the proper one, in her opinion. At times her questions were reproachful. The first time Clim noticed this was when she asked:

"You don't correspond with your brother, do you?"

"How do you know?"

"I'm asking."

"But then, you ask as if you already knew that we don't correspond with each other."

"But why don't you?"

Clim said:

"We aren't much alike. Our interests, too, are different."

Looking at him with a smile in which he felt something unflattering to himself, she asked:

"And what are your interests?"

Clim had been cut to the quick by her smile; wishing to conceal his hurt he answered in somewhat high-flown language:

"I suppose that, first of all, it's imperative to have an honest attitude toward myself, that it's necessary, with all possible precision, to establish the limits of my personality. Only then is it possible to understand the true demands of my *I*."

"A laudable intention," Madame Spivak said, biting a thread in two. "Even if it takes all of your life, or most of it."

After reflecting a moment Clim asked:

"Is that irony?"

"No. Why?"

Offended, he walked away in silence, without answering. But in the courtyard, on the way to his own room, he realized that it was foolish of him to be offended, and that he was only making himself ridiculous.

Clim could not bring himself to enter into arguments with her — but then, he usually avoided arguments. Her pliant mind and wide reading amazed and perplexed him. He knew that the general structure of her mind was akin to "Kutuzovishness," and at the same time everything that she said seemed to him the detached comment of a stranger, who observed the phenomena of life from afar. Samghin suspected that certain firm decisions lurked behind this estranged attitude of her opinions. But there was nothing definite that he could lay hands on, nothing like the cold-blooded curiosity he found in Turoboev. Although listening to her had its uses, Samghin rejoiced whenever Inokov arrived and drew half of her attention to him.

Inokov would come into the room, bow silently to everyone, and seat himself. But wherever he sat, he seemed always uncomfortable. He would get up, move his chair into the middle of the room, and sit there listening to the music while his eyes travelled solemnly from one object in the room to another, as though he were counting them. He wore a short jacket made out of sacking. Whenever he lifted his hands to smooth his tousled hair, Clim would read on the side of the jacket a brand, half washed off: "First Quality. Steam Flour Mill of Y. Bashkirov." As long as Spivak played, Inokov refrained from smoking; but as soon as the musician dropped his tired arms from the keyboard, Inokov lit a cheap cigarette, and asked in his dull monotone:

"But how is a sonata distinguished from a suite?"

Eyeing him askance over his spectacles, Spivak said:

"You don't need to know that; you're not a musician."

Elizaveta, putting her sewing aside, sat down at the piano, and, after explaining the architectonic difference between a sonata and a suite, began questioning Inokov about his "outlook on life." He talked about himself willingly and in detail, but with perplexity, as though he were speaking of a friend whom he did not understand very well. It seemed to Clim that, as he talked, Inokov kept asking: "Isn't that true?"

Inokov seemed to be rolling over the earth like a nut over a plate which someone's impatient hand was holding and shaking. The lad was becoming more distasteful to Clim from every point of view. He seemed to flaunt his coarseness, as though he wished to be unpleasant. Whenever he began to tell about his life, Clim, after listening to him for two or three minutes, would leave the room.

Lidia had written to her father that she would go on to Moscow from Crimea, and that she had again decided to enter a school of

the dramatic arts. In a very brief letter to Clim she informed him that Alena had broken her engagement to Liutov and was going to marry Turoboev.

"This was to be expected," Clim reflected, and smiled as he pictured Liutov hysterically shouting and writhing.

XV

I

HIS illness and its attendant indolence had prevented Clim from applying for his transfer to the university at Moscow. All things considered, he had decided to rest, not to study that year. But he found life at home very dreary, and, despite everything, he moved to Moscow. The end of September found him walking through sundry city lanes one windy morning, seeking Lidia's quarters.

The leaves, torn off by the wind, fluttered through the air like bats; a fine drizzle was falling; heavy drops of water fell from the roofs, drumming on the silk of his umbrella; the water grumbled angrily in rusty waterspouts. The wet, frowning little houses stared at Clim with windows that were like tear-dimmed eyes. He reflected that such houses would prove convenient dwelling places for counterfeiters, receivers of stolen goods, and unhappy people. Here and there among these houses were tiny forgotten churches.

"No temples these, but little dog kennels," thought Clim; he liked the idea.

Lidia lived in one of these houses, on the second floor of a wing. Its walls were without ornaments; its windows were without any casings; its stucco had crumpled away. The wing of the house had the appearance of one who had been beaten and robbed.

Lidia met Clim with much animation and pleasure; her face had an agitated expression which belied her laughing eyes. She seemed to be a bit under the weather.

"Samghin, comrade and friend of my childhood!" she cried, leading Clim into a bare room, with a painted floor which sloped crazily toward the windows. Several persons were sitting about the room. A short fellow got up and quickly seized Clim's hand. Shaking it up and down he introduced himself in an apologetic tone of voice.

"Semion Diomidov."

A sharp-nosed girl with a magnificent but dishevelled coiffure gave her name:

"Varvara Antipova."

"Stepan Marakuev," a curly-haired student said, who had a face like a singer-dancer in a tavern troupe.

A bald-headed man got up from a place near the blue-figured tiled oven. He limped a little. He wore a long pongee blouse which reached below his knees, girded with a stout, tasselled cord. He said, with a snort, sucking in his words:

"Uncle Chrysanth. Variya, see to it! Honour and place for the guest!"

He took Clim by the arm and tenderly, as though Clim were an invalid, seated him on a divan.

Five minutes later, Samghin could hardly be blamed for thinking that Uncle Chrysanth had been for a long time impatiently expecting him, and that he was overjoyed because Clim had at last appeared. The uncle's round face, that looked like a newborn babe's, was constantly wreathed in enraptured smiles. These smiles, showing themselves first on his plump lips, widened the nostrils of his blunt nose and puffed out his cheeks, then wrinkled up the skin around his little babyish, elusively coloured eyes, and finally took possession of his whole face, crinkling his forehead

up into the shiny pink skin of his skull. It was an odd thing to watch.

"Well, we were dissecting *Tartuff* here," Uncle Chrysanth said, sitting down beside Clim. As he talked, his feet, clad in coloured slippers, scraped the floor. Two lamps illuminated the room. One stood on a pier-glass table in a space between the windows; the other hung on a chain from the ceiling. Under it stood Diomidov, looking like one who had committed suicide by hanging, his hands dangling along his body, his head leaning toward one shoulder. Clim felt ill at ease under the man's intent gaze, and wished he would stop looking at him. On the other side, Uncle Chrysanth was deafening him with a sing-song, enraptured speech:

"I adore Moscow! I'm proud of being a Moscovite! Devoutly —yes, sir!—I walk through the same streets with our famous artists and scholars! Happy am I to take my hat off before Vassilii Ossipovich Kluchevsky;[39] Tolstoi, Leo—Leo, sir!—twice have I met. And when Maria Ermolova goes to rehearsal, why, I swear I'm ready to get down on my knees in the middle of the street!"

2

Lidia, in a red blouse and a black skirt, and Varvara in a dark green dress, were bustling about in the adjoining room. The student Marakuev, who was out of Clim's range of vision, was laughing. Lidia seemed shorter in stature, and more than ever resembled a gypsy. She had become plumper; her once slender little figure had lost its elusive, other-world quality. This disturbed Clim. Inattentively listening to Uncle Chrysanth's enraptured outpourings, he studied Diomidov, who was walking noiselessly back and forth from one corner of the room to another.

At first glance, Diomidov's face impressed Clim with its radi-

ant beauty, but soon he came to think that it was just such mawkish beauty that was scornfully called angelic. The round, soft face, illuminated by virginal blue eyes, seemed artificially tinted; the plump lips were too red; the yellow eyebrows were too wide and too thick; in general, it was the immobile mask of a porcelain doll. The light-flaxen curly hair which hung in cascades to the shoulders, made Clim want to peep and see if Diomidov did not have white wings on his back. As he paced through the room, the youth frequently and carefully threw the locks of his hair behind his tiny, elegant ears, and squeezed his temples, as though he were feeling his head to see if it were still there.

Diomidov was of medium height and very graceful. He was dressed in a black blouse, belted with a broad strap; on his feet were soft-soled, well-polished boots. Clim noticed that two or three times the lad, glancing at him, bit his lip, as though hesitating about asking him something.

"I have had the honour of knowing Nikolai Nikolaevich Zlatovratsky personally," Uncle Chrysanth was explaining in solemn rapture.[40]

Even after Lidia had called them to tea, he talked at length about Moscow and the famous people who thronged its streets.

"Both the brains of Russia and its great heart are in Moscow," he shouted, pointing toward the window, against the panes of which the damp darkness of the autumn evening pressed closely.

The sharp-nosed Varvara was sitting with her head raised proudly. Her greenish eyes smiled to the student Marakuev, who was whispering something in her ear, and puffing out his cheeks amusingly. Lidia, pouring the tea, was frowning.

"These glorifications cannot be to her liking," Clim reflected, observing Diomidov, who was bent over his glass. Uncle Chrysanth, wearied with talking at last, wiped the sweat from his

face and from his bald patch with a backward sweep of his hand like the movement of a cat's paw. He dried his wet palm against his shoulder and asked Clim:

"But Peterburg is more to your heart's liking?"

It seemed to Clim as if the question had an ironic sound. Out of politeness he did not want to differ from the Moscovite in his evaluation of the old city, but before he was ready to console Uncle Chrysanth, Diomidov, without raising his head, said, assuredly and loudly:

"In Peterburg one's sleep is heavier. In damp places sleep is always heavy. And the dreams in Peterburg are in a class by themselves; such horrible things as one dreams there would never come to you in your sleep in Orel."

After a glance at Clim he added:

"I'm from Orel."

Lidia was gazing at Diomidov expectantly, but again he bent over, hiding his face. Clim adopted Uncle Chrysanth's manner and talked of Moscow in a similarly complimentary vein.

"Seen from the Poklonnaya Hill it looks like a chaotic heap of gaily coloured rubbish, swept up from all Russia; but the golden heads of its numerous churches speak eloquently of the fact that it is not rubbish, but most precious ore."

"Splendidly said!" approved Uncle Chrysanth, and beamed with a happy smile.

"Those little churches are touching, lost among the houses of men. God's little kennels!"

"A word from the heart! Most aptly put!" Uncle Chrysanth exclaimed, jumping up from his chair. And he bubbled over again with delight.

"Exactly! The little kennels of the God of Russia, of Moscow, of the very people! A remarkable God is ours — simplicity itself! Not in a chasuble, nor in a mantle, but in a blouse, sir. Yes,

yes! Our God, even as our people, is an enigma to all the universe!"

"Are you a believer?" Diomidov asked Clim quietly, but Varvara began hissing at him. Uncle Chrysanth was talking, waving his arm, trying to open his little eyes as wide as possible, but he only made his grey eyebrows tremble, and his eyes glittered dully like two pewter buttons caught within red buttonholes.

3

As if he had been stung or had suddenly recalled something alarming, Diomidov jumped off his chair and began thrusting out his hand to all those present, without a word. Clim decided that Lidia held this hand, which was much too white, in her own for several seconds more than she should have. The student Marakuev also made his adieus. He had put on his cap at a rakish angle, even while still in the room.

"Do you want to see how I have arranged my place?" Lidia invited.

In a long narrow room stood a ponderous bed, two-thirds as wide as the room itself. Its tall carved head and its small mountain of elaborate pillows made Clim think:

"That's a bed for an old woman."

A pot-bellied bureau, with a mirror stand on it in the form of a lyre; three clumsy chairs; a rather old-fashioned armchair upon very short legs near a table at the window — these constituted the entire furnishings of the room. The walls were papered in white and were cold and bare. Only in one place — opposite the bed — was their severity relieved by the dark square of a small photograph: a sea, as smooth as glass, and the prow of a barque on which stood Lidia and Alena, their arms about each other.

"Ascetic," said Clim, recalling Nekhaeva's cosy nest.

"I don't like anything superfluous."

Lidia sat down in the armchair, crossing one leg over the other and folding her arms on her breast. Immediately she began to tell him awkwardly about her trip on the Volga, through the Caucasus, over the sea from Batum to the Crimea. She spoke as if she were hurrying to render a report of her impressions. Often she spoke in clichés that reminded him of the descriptions in steamship companies' advertisements of cruises. Only rarely would she put in a few words that Clim accepted as her own.

"If you could only see how horrible it is when millions of herrings shoal in one solid blind mass to cast their roe! It's so stupid that it's frightening."

Of the Caucasus she said:

"An infernal landscape, with little black figures of underroasted sinners. Iron mountains, and on them pitiful grass that looks like a green rust. D'you know, I dislike nature more and more," she concluded her report, smiling, and emphasizing the word "nature" by wrinkling her nose in disdain. "Mountains, water, fish—it's all amazingly depressing and silly. It makes one pity people. And I don't know how to pity."

"You're a rather old and sage woman," Clim joked, realizing that the coincidence of her opinions with his own fruitless reflections was most agreeable to him.

The rain rustled outside the window. A gas street-lamp flared up; its anaemic light illuminated the small grey beads of the rain drops; Lidia became silent, crossing her arms on her breast and gazing at the window in abstraction. Clim asked:

"Just what is Uncle Chrysanth?"

"First of all, he's a very kindly man. You know, such an inexhaustibly kind chap—incurably so, I'd say."

And, her dark eyes smiling, she began speaking so animatedly

and warmly that Clim looked at her in wonder. She seemed a different person, not at all the one who, several minutes before, had been reciting a dry report.

"I believe he's sincerely in love with Moscow, with the people, and the persons he talks about. However, the beings he doesn't love don't exist on this earth. I've never yet met such a man. He's unbearable; he's possessed of an exceptional facility for uttering banalities with rapture; but, notwithstanding, one can envy a man who celebrates life in such a fashion."

She told him that in his youth Uncle Chrysanth had been politically compromised. This had put him on the outs with his father, a rich landowner. Thereafter he had been a proofreader, a prompter, and, after the death of his father, had embarked on theatrical enterprises in the provinces. He became bankrupt and even served a prison sentence for his debts. Then he coached in private theatricals and married a rich widow. She died, leaving all her property to Varvara, her daughter. Now Uncle Chrysanth was living with his step-daughter, teaching elocution in a private theatrical school.

"And this Varvara?"

"Varvara is talented," Lidia answered, as her eyes, questioning, halted on Clim's face.

"What makes you look at me so?" he asked her in confusion.

"I'm wondering: Are you talented?"

"I don't know," Clim answered modestly.

"You must have some sort of a talent," she said, studying him thoughtfully.

Taking advantage of her silence, Clim asked about the thing which interested him chiefly—about Diomidov.

"Queer fellow, isn't he?" Lidia exclaimed again, growing animated. She told him that Diomidov was an orphan, a foundling. Until his ninth year he had been educated by an old maid,

the sister of a teacher of history. Then she had died. The teacher had ruined himself through drink and had also died two years later, and Diomidov was taken as an apprentice by a wood-carver who made frames for icons. After working with him for five years, Diomidov had gone to his brother, a bachelor and a drunkard, and was now living with him.

"Chrysanth is urging him to go on the stage. But I can't imagine a fellow less theatrical than Semion. Oh, what a pure youth he is!"

"And he's in love with you," Clim remarked, smiling.

"And he's in love with me," automatically Lidia echoed.

"And you?"

She did not answer. But Clim saw her swarthy face redden in confusion. Tucking her legs under her in the armchair, she crossed her arms, clutched her shoulders with both hands, and huddled into a little ball.

"What odd people I see," she said, sighing. "Very odd. And, in general, how difficult it is to understand people!"

Clim nodded his head in agreement. When he could not immediately form an opinion for himself about some person, he felt that such a person was dangerous to him. Such dangerous people were increasing in number, and, among them, Lidia stood the nearest of all to him. This propinquity he immediately sensed with especial vividness. He suddenly wanted to tell her everything about himself, without concealing a single thought; to tell her once more that he loved her, but that he did not understand her and was afraid of something about her. Alarmed by this desire he got up and made his farewells.

"Come again soon," she said. "Do come tomorrow — tomorrow's a holiday."

On the street, small drops of rain fell in a steady autumn drizzle. The water gurgled drearily in streams; the houses

huddled close to one another, as though they were afraid that, were they to separate, they would melt away. Even the light of the street lamps seemed liquid. Clim engaged a dark, sour-looking cabby. His wet nag, swinging its head, clumped off over the cobbles. Clim shivered in the chill dampness. His vexed thoughts struggled with two problems: that of people who were able to utter, in rapture, extraordinary stupidities, and that of himself — a man who was still unable to create his own system of phrases.

"The intelligence of man is merely a system of phrases, no more and no less. That was foolish — about the little kennels of God. Foolish. But still more foolish was the God of Moscow in a blouse. And why are dreams in Orel more pleasant than dreams in Peterburg? It is obvious that all these banalities are necessary to people merely that each may distinguish himself from the others. In substance, this is petty thievery."

4

Several evenings at Uncle Chrysanth's had fully convinced Samghin that Lidia lived among strange people. Every time he saw Diomidov, there was aroused in him a complex feeling of curiosity, incomprehension and irresolute jealousy. The student Marakuev seemed antagonized by Diomidov. Varvara was condescending and protective; while Lidia's attitude was capricious. Sometimes during a whole evening she would not notice Diomidov. She would talk to Marakuev, or make fun of Marakuev's love of the people. But on other evenings she would speak *sotto voce* only to him, or would listen to his low, murmuring speech. Diomidov always talked smilingly, and so slowly that his words seemed to come to him with difficulty.

"There are domesticated people, and wild ones. I am wild," he would say apologetically. "I understand domesticated people,

but I don't feel at ease with them. It always seems to me that someone will walk up to me and say: 'Come with me!' And I shall go, no one knows whither."

"Why 'tis I, I, who'll lead you along!" Uncle Chrysanth would shout. "I'll make a first-class artist out of you. You'll show them such a Romeo, such a Hamlet. . . ."

Diomidov, smoothing his hair, smiled diffidently; his lack of confidence was so apparent that Clim reflected: "Lidia was right; this fellow can never be an actor; he is too stupid to act untruths."

But on certain occasions Uncle Chrysanth made Diomidov and his step-daughter recite several scenes from *Romeo and Juliet*. Clim, indifferent to the theatre, was struck by the grandiloquent power with which the light-haired youth uttered the words of love and passion. He proved to have a soft tenor, which, even though not rich in shadings, was musical and resonant. Samghin, listening to the beautiful words of Romeo, asked himself: "Why does this chap pretend to be a modest little fellow, why did he style himself wild? Why was Lidia concealing the fact that he was talented? There she was, gazing at him wide-eyed. A bright flush had coloured the swarthy skin of her cheeks, and her fingers, lying upon her knees, were trembling.

Uncle Chrysanth, sitting astride a chair with his head back, his upper lip and eyebrows raised, straining the thick calves of his rather short legs, was continuously in action, throwing his corpulent torso upward. His face and voice were radiant; he winked in delight.

"Excellent!" he shouted, after clapping his palms together three times. Magnificent! But the manner is wrong! That was spoken, not by an Italian, but by a Mordvin. That was reflection, but not passion; remorse, but not love! Love demands a gesture. Where's your gesture? Your face isn't alive! Your soul is only

in your eyes; that doesn't suffice! Not all of the public looks at the stage through binoculars."

Lidia walked to the window, and, drawing figures on the sweated pane with her finger, said in a rather stifled voice:

"It seems to me that it was too — soft."

"He doesn't enflame one at all," Varvara agreed, eyeing Diomidov from head to foot with an angry glance of her greenish eyes; and only then Clim recalled that she had answered Diomidov with Juliet's replies in a colourless voice, and that whenever she spoke her neck became unattractively taut.

Diomidov's head dropped; he stuck his thumbs in his belt and said guiltily:

"I don't believe in the theatre."

"That's because you don't know a damn thing," Uncle Chrysanth shouted in a frenzy. "You just read the book: *The Political Rôle of the French Theatre,* by this — what d'you call him? — Boborikin! "

Jumping at Diomidov, he shoved him into a corner, toward the oven, and there began trying to convince him.

"You ought to be struck with an Evangel over your thick skull — with the Parable of the Talents! "

"I don't believe in that parable either," Clim heard the low words.

"Of course he's stupid," Clim decided; and when Lidia burst into laughter, he accepted her laughter as a confirmation of his judgment.

Later on, sitting in her room, he said:

"Do you remember — your father said that all people are tied, every one by his own little rope, and that the little rope is stronger than they? "

"He himself is on a little rope," Lidia answered indifferently, not looking at him.

"If you're saying that of Semion, then it isn't true," she continued. "He's free. In him there is something winged."

She talked reluctantly, like a wife who finds conversation with her husband a bore. On this particular evening she seemed older by five years. She sat wrapped in a shawl which tightly enveloped her shoulders, huddled up in her armchair as if she were cold. Clim felt that she was far away from him. But this did not hinder him from thinking that now the girl was not pretty. Yet as she sat there, aloof, he found himself wanting to walk up to her, to place his head on her knees, and once more experience that unusual state which he had already felt once. In his memory sounded Romeo's words and Uncle Chrysanth's shout: "Love demands a gesture!"

But he could not bring himself to make a gesture. Depressed, he bade her farewell and went away, trying for the tenth time to discover why was he drawn to this girl — Why?

"I'm inventing her. For she is not the one who could ever open for me the doors to some fabulous paradise!"

And still he felt that somewhere deep within him there was a firm conviction that Lidia was created for a special life and love. Discernment in the matter of his feelings toward her was very much interfered with by a torrent of impressions, a torrent in which Samghin whirled more and more rapidly without a will of his own.

5

Of Sundays, in the evenings, his friends would gather at Uncle Chrysanth's. These people, of a mature age and of a similar mood, all felt that they had been wronged, and every one of them brought rumours and facts which intensified their wrongs even more; and all of them were fond of drinking and eating, for Uncle Chrysanth owned a treasure in the enormous cook, Anphi-

mievna, who baked amazing fish pies. Among these people were two actors, convinced that they had played all their rôles as none had ever played them, nor ever would.

One of them was a pompous grey-haired shaggy chap with heavy jowls and with an all-contemptuous look in his stern eyes of a man weary of fame.

He wore a short velvet jacket magnificently, and soft chamois shoes; under his bulldog chin a showy blue cravat was tied in a bow. He suffered from gout and walked carefully, as though he despised even the earth. He drank and ate a great deal and talked but little. No matter whose name might be mentioned in his presence, he would dismiss it with a gesture of his heavy, blueish hand and proclaim in a rumbling bass:

"I know him."

He would say nothing more, evidently convinced that in these three words was included a sufficiently lethal appraisal of the person. He was an Anglomanic—perhaps because he drank only English bitters. He drank with his eyes tightly shut and his head thrown back, as though he wanted to have the whiskey penetrate to the nape of his neck.

The other actor, less imposing, was a bald chap, with a toothless mouth. *Pince-nez* surmounted his beak, which was as hooked as a hawk's. His ears were like a rabbit's, large and sensitive. He bustled about in a greyish jacket, grey trousers flapping about his thin legs with their sharp knee-caps, and told endless anecdotes. He drank vodka voluptuously, chasing it down only with rye bread, and, curling his lips, supplemented the appreciations of the more important actor with three words:

"He? An alcoholic."

He asserted that he was writing *The Memoirs of a Night Bird,* and explained:

"The night bird is myself—an actor. Actors and women live

only at night. I love everything historical to the verge of self-oblivion."

As confirmation of his love for history he told them how the most talented Andreëv-Burlak had once drunk away, before the performance, the costume in which he was supposed to play *Iudushka Golovlev;* how Shuisky used to drink; how Rinna-Syrovarova, when she was in an intoxicated state, didn't know which one of three men was her husband. Half of such a story he would tell in a whisper, spluttering his words and jerking his left leg. He set great store by this trembling of his leg.

"Such a convulsive trembling seized Napoleon Bonaparte at the best moments of his life."

Clim Samghin had grown used to measuring people with the yardstick which was most comprehensible to him and for him these two actors coloured to their hue all of Uncle Chrysanth's friends.

6

Clim regarded a certain well-known writer he had met there—a large-bearded, stockily built old man with small eyes—as a man who had played out his rôle. Having created fame for himself in the seventies by an idealization of the peasantry, this littérateur, although he did not have any fine talents, still aroused a most sincere delight in his readers by the lyricism of his love for, and belief in, the people. He had outlived his fame, but this love still remained alive, even though it was aggrieved by the fact that the reader no longer valued or accepted it. Offended by this, the old man grumblingly upbraided the young littérateurs, reproaching them with betraying the people.

"They're all Leikins; they write for diversion.[41] Korolenko, now, is perhaps so-so, and yet—! He wrote something about cockroaches. In the city a cockroach is a trifle, but you go and

observe it in the village, and *then* write it up. Take Chekhov; how they praise him! And yet he's nothing but a soulless trickster. He scribbles in grey ink. One reads, but can't see a thing. All of these new writers seem to be immature."

He was especially irritated by the Marxists, so irritated that an evil glitter would come into his eyes. Pulling at his beard he thundered:

"Recently a certain Pole blurted right out in my face: 'Your bid on the people has been beaten; there is no people; there are only classes.' A jurist in his second year, a Jew. Classes, indeed! He's forgotten, evidently, how his kinsmen were put through classic pogroms!"

Then, content with his pretentious and sombre pun, he smiled.

He walked heavily, like a peasant following a plow; and in general, his figure, his gestures and his words suggested the *mouzhik*. Recalling the Tolstoian who dressed himself up as a *mouzhik*, Samghin said to Makarov:

"He's a skillful actor."

Makarov made a wry face and replied:

"I don't think he's acting. Perhaps at some time or other he adopted all these mannerisms, submitting to the fashion; but now all this is his own. Notice that he sometimes talks naïvely, not at all cleverly; and still one would never laugh at him—No! Fine old man! A personality!"

Having drunk some vodka, the old writer fell to speaking of the past, of the people with whom he had begun his labours. The young people listened to the names of littérateurs unfamiliar to them, and wondered, exchanging puzzled glances.

"Naumov, Bazhin, Zasodimski, Levitov. . . ."[42]

"Have you read any such writers?" Clim asked Makarov.

"No. Of the two Uspenskis, I've read Gleb; but there was also a Nikolai, I learn for the first time. Gleb is a hysterical

author. However, I don't understand very well the belletrists, the novelists, and in general, all *ists*. Ordinarily, I re*sist* the *ist*."

He smiled, but immediately added, sadly:

"I'm afraid they'll drive Lidia into politics."

Makarov was often at Lidia's, but never stayed there long. He talked to her in the grumbling tone of an older brother. With Varvara he spoke negligently, and, at times, even jeeringly. He called Marakuev and Poyarkov "choristers," and Uncle Chrysanth he dubbed "The Saint of Moscow." All this pleased Clim; he no longer recalled Makarov on the terrace of the country house, bare-footed, fatigued, and preaching naïve things.

7

There was also another writer, an author of short stories dealing with the lives of petty people who suffered from petty misfortunes. Makarov called these stories "news items to Nikolai, the miracle worker." The writer himself was of small height, rather corpulent, with a face marred by skin disease. He had a small blackish beard, and unkind eyes. In order to soften their cruel gaze he smiled vaguely and forcedly; his smile, wrinkling up his dark face, aged it. When sober he talked but little, guardedly, scrutinizing his blueish nails with great attention and coughing dryly into the sleeve of his jacket. But when he had had a drink he would declaim in inappropriate phrases of great significance:

"'I am slave, I am king; I am worm, I am God!' The substance is always the same, whether that of a worm or that of a Goethe."

He composed proverbs, and also thrust them into the conversation unexpectedly and inappropriately:

"Gogols, Gogols — Are there many such big Moguls?"

He was called Nikodim Ivanovich and once Clim heard him saying to Diomidov, as he smiled enigmatically:

"Let us tarry, let us stay to hear what Nikodim may say."

Having said something concerning the people and their existence, he would cough into his sleeve, and five minutes later he would be talking differently, and as though he were mentally testing with his fingers the soundness of his words:

"Even so, everything isn't as we see it; even the Greeks knew that. The people have proved to be different from what the generation of the seventies thought them."

The man was so continuously enigmatic and absent-minded that Samghin thought these characteristics affected. Often he would cut his speech short in the middle of a phrase, and, after taking from the side pocket of his dark jacket a small leather book, he would hide it under the table on his knee and there note down in it something with a pencil. He managed in this way to give the impression that Nikodim Ivanovich always lived in a state of irrepressible creativeness. Diomidov, who disliked the writer, was nevertheless taken in by this creative pose:

"He's writing things down again—D'you see?" he would ask Lidia, quietly and somewhat awed.

Nikodim Ivanovich ate a great deal, without any of the graces, and, evidently realizing this, tried to eat unobserved. He swallowed his food quickly without masticating it; as a result, his stomach was bad and he suffered from hiccoughs. Having gorged, he would blink shamefacedly and cover his mouth with his palm; then, poking his nose in his sleeve and coughing, he would walk over to the window, take his stand with his back to everybody, and secretly rub his abdomen.

Once, at such a time, the mischievous student Marakuev, winking at Varvara, walked up to him and asked:

"What is it you're looking at so intently, Nikodim Ivanovich?"

The writer, squirming uneasily, said:

"Well, d'you see, there's a star flaming there, useless to me and to you. It blazed up there tens of thousands of years before us, and for tens of thousands of years more it will continue to burn fruitlessly, and none of us will live through even half a century!"

Diomidov, who had been drinking vodka distilled from prunes, and was slightly drunk, announced loudly in a protesting tone:

"You got that out of an astronomy book. But perhaps the entire universe is held in place by this star now — its last fastening. And yet you want — What is it you want?"

"That's none of your business, young man," said the writer in a huff.

8

A certain professor, with a red face and a red bald spot on the top of his head, who had written, ten years before, an article outlining a social program, used to visit Uncle Chrysanth's. In this article he had proved that the revolution in Russia could not be carried out, that there was needed a gradual blending of all the opposed forces of the land into one party of reform. This party must by degrees obtain from the Czar the summoning of a *Zemsky* [Agrarian] conclave. Because of this article, he had been removed from the university. Since that time, holding the rank of "one who had suffered for liberty," he lived without further effort to change the current of history; he was self-satisfied, garrulous, and, preferring red wine to all other drinks, drank, as everybody in Russia does, without restraint.

Marakuev, who was something of a buck, and another student, Poyarkov, an excellent guitarist — freckled, lanky, and in some way resembling a subdeacon — courted Varvara vehemently. She

tragically rolled her green eyes at them, and, tossing her reddish hair, tried to talk in a husky voice, *à la* Erlomova; but, sometimes, forgetting herself, she talked through her nose, *à la* Savvina.

Makarov and Diomidov hovered around Lidia persistently. They, too, did not hinder each other. Makarov treated the property man's helper even amiably, although behind his back he talked about him with vexation.

"The devil knows him — Is he a mystic, or what? He's sort of half-mad. And Lidia, too, it seems, has a leaning in that direction. Altogether, the company is not the most brilliant."

Swallowed up in observations, Clim Samghin saw himself as one apart from everybody, but he had ceased to care much. He felt that the modest rôle of a bystander was useful, and pleasant, and that it was drawing him closer to Lidia. Her conduct during these evenings was the conduct of a foreigner who poorly understands the language of those surrounding her, listens strainedly to their tangled speeches, and, untangling them, has no time to speak herself. Her dark eyes glided over the faces of the people, stopping now on one, now on another, but always briefly and questioningly, as though she had noticed these faces but just that minute. Clim had more than once tried to find out: What did she think of people? But shrugging her shoulders in silence she would not answer, and only on one occasion, when Clim began to interrogate her importunately, she said, as though repulsing him:

"I don't know. Perhaps I don't know how to think."

Sometimes Zuev, an insignificant dwarfish man, would come there. His hair was smoothly combed. He had a diminutive face, from the middle of which a squashed nose stuck out. And all of Zuev — flat, in a wrinkled suit — seemed squashed and chewed up. He was about forty, but everybody called him Misha.

"Well, what's new, Misha?" the old writer would ask him.

In a low voice, as though he were reading mass for his dead relatives, he would answer:

"There have been arrests in the Marinova Grove. In Tver. In Nizhni-Novgorod."

Sometimes, he would mention the names of the arrested, and this enumeration of people taken into captivity was listened to in silence. Then the old littérateur would say sadly:

"They're all wrong. They can't catch everybody. Eh, what a pity! They arrested Nathason; he was a remarkable organizer. Each one acts for himself; that's why they fall through so frequently. Leaders are needed — old men. The world is held together by old men — the world of the peasants."

"There is need of an alliance of all forces," the professor would remind them. There is need of restraint and of consistency."

Nikodim Ivanovich would agree with them in a proverb:

"Haste makes waste."

"And yet, after all, if they are making arrests, it means the embers are still alive!" the unimportant actor would console them.

9

Uncle Chrysanth, all aglow, excited, and sweating, was tirelessly on the run between the main room and the kitchen, and more than once it happened that, at the very saddest moments in these stories of people in prisons and exiled to Siberia, his exultant voice would resound:

"Have a little vodka, I implore!"

Trying to hold expressions of pensiveness and sorrow on their faces, they all went to the table in the corner, where bottles of different-coloured vodkas glistened temptingly, and platters with all sorts of delicacies challenged them. The important actor, sighing, would confess:

"Strictly speaking, drink is bad for me."

And, pouring out some vodka, he would add:

"But I remain true to English bitters. And, somehow or other, I can't even understand any other drink."

The monumental Anphimievna would enter bearing in her outstretched hands a fish pie weighing half a *poud,* and, having had her sweet fill of the noisy expressions of general delight before the massive beauty of her creativeness, would curtsy to everybody, holding her hands against her abdomen, saying benignly:

"Eat hearty!"

Uncle Chrysanth and Varvara would shift the bottles from the occasional table to the dining table. The unimportant actor always exclaimed:

"Carthage must be destroyed!"

On one occasion, after swallowing his first piece, he put down his knife and fork, and, pressing his hands to his temples, asked with a quiet joy:

"Listen! What *is* this?"

Everybody looked at him, supposing that he had burned himself. His very eyes had become humid. But, shaking his head, he said:

"This is truly the food of the gods! Lord! How very talented the Russian woman is!"

He suggested that Anphimievna be called in and her health drunk. This was seconded and carried out unanimously.

Not forgetting that Paschal night in Peterburg, Samghin drank cautiously and awaited the most interesting moment, when, having eaten well and drunk moderately, but not yet become tipsy, everybody would talk at the same time. The result was a blizzard of words, an amusing babel of phrases:

"In England even a Jew may be a lord!"

"In order to fry a wood-cock with that thoroughness which the quality of its flesh merits. . . ."

"Plekhanovishness!" [43] the old littérateur shouted, and the student Poyarkov obstinately, in a sepulchral voice, contradicted him:

"The German Social Democrats attained their might through legal means."

Marakuev affirmed that in the Reichstag two-thirds of the members were priests, and Uncle Chrysanth declared:

"Christ has entered into the flesh of the Russian people!"

"Let us leave Christ to Tolstoi!"

"N-never! Not for anything!"

"Molière — that's already a prejudice!"

"You prefer Sardou, isn't that so?"

"Fiddlesticks!"

"They now go to the theatre through habit, as into a church, without the belief that churchgoing is obligatory."

"That's not true, Diomidov!"

"You, my dear fellow, eat as much as you can of buckwheat porridge, and it will pass!"

"We all live on alms given for the sake of Christ."

"Bravo! 'Tis sad but true!"

"And yet I affirm that Europe shall be ruled by Englishmen."

"Why, he was brought up on charges even in that Astirev affair!" [44]

"All of Kisselevsky's talent was in his voice, but there wasn't a mustard seed of it in his soul."

"Will you please pass the vinegar?"

"No, really, I beg your pardon! In Nizhni-Novgorod, in the little village of Podnovie, gherkins are pickled much better than in Nezhin!"

"Let the Turk get out of Europe! Out!"

"Dostoievsky has been forgotten!"

"But what of Saltikov-Shchedrin?"

"That season he had Koroedova-Zmieva as his mistress—such a—well, one doesn't say things like that out loud."

"Now Witte will be twisting Russia around his finger."

"You've got your government monopoly on vodka, and so you live on!"

As they were all laughing, Nikodim Ivanovich suddenly began declaiming:

The writer, if he truly be
The wave, with Russia as his ocean,
Cannot, unmoved, unstirring, see
His element in wild commotion.

"And, most important of all, keep your feet warm."

"Russia's coming to a boil! She's boiling up again."

"The student body. . . . The federated Soviet. . . ."

"No, the Marxists are not fated to make the Narodniki tumble off."

"Well, if anyone knows what art is, I do. I'm the property man."

Into this whirlwind of words Clim would now and then cast some little expression of Varavka's. It would vanish with never a trace, together with the words of the others. The professor would get up with a glass of red wine. Raising his hand high, he proclaimed:

"Gentlemen! I suggest that you fill your glasses! Let's drink—to Her!"

They all arose, then, and drank in silence, knowing that they were drinking to the Constitution. The professor, after draining his glass, would say:

"May she come!"

Almost always he unerringly chose for his toast a moment when the mature people were becoming depressed, when they were getting into a pensive mood, and the youthful ones, on the other hand, were becoming enflamed. Poyarkov would play on his guitar like a virtuoso. Then, in a chorus, they sang intoxicating Russian songs which make the heart swoon and everything in life seem to sob.

Diomidov, losing his self-consciousness, would sing excellently in a high tenor voice. There were being revealed in him certain unexpected qualities that aroused Clim's sympathy. It was clear that in talking about his timidity before domesticated people, the youthful property man was pretending. Once Marakuev was animatedly condemning the young Czar, because the latter, having heard to the end the report about the students who had refused to take the oath of allegiance to him, had said: "I'll get along without them."

Almost everybody agreed that this was neither diplomatic nor wise. But the soft-hearted Uncle Chrysanth, in confusion, attempted to justify the new leader of the people:

"He's young. Feels his oats."

The unimportant actor would uphold him, unrolling his knowledge of history:

"They all feel their oats in their youth; for instance, Henry the Fourth. . . ."

Diomidov, with a smile which scarcely ruffled his moon-like face, said joyously and somehow with envy:

"A very courageous Czar!"

And with the same smile he turned to Marakuev:

"There you fellows are, arranging some sort of a league of students, and yet he's not afraid of you. For he knows that the people aren't any too fond of the students."

"Most worthy youth, Semione! Don't be talking bosh," Mara-

kuev cut him short abruptly. Varvara burst into laughter. Poyarkov, too, began laughing, as metallically as though a barber's scissors were clicking in his throat.

But when the Czar had declared that all hopes for limiting his powers were senseless, even Uncle Chrysanth said despondently:

"He listens to scoundrels; that's bad!"

But the property man, looking at everybody with the eyes of a grown-up looking at children, repeated approvingly and stubbornly:

"No. He's an honest fellow. He has the courage of his convictions. One against all!"

Marakuev, Poyarkov, and their Jewish comrade, Preis, were shouting:

"What do you mean — alone? What of his *gens d'armes?* His bureaucrats?"

"Those are just servants!" said Diomidov. "No one asks servants how to live."

They began trying to convince him at the top of their voices, but he became stubbornly silent, letting his head sink and looking under the table.

Clim Samghin knew that Diomidov was boorish, but this only served to strengthen his sympathy toward the youth. Lidia could never love such a fellow. At best, she bore herself toward him with magnanimity, taking pity on him as she would upon a well-bred stray kitten. He even coveted a bit Diomidov's stubbornness and his mocking outlook on the students. More and more of them were appearing at Uncle Chrysanth's cosy dwelling, tucked away in the courtyard. They sat down to their meetings in a businesslike way in Varvara's room, that was decorated with a great many photographs and engravings depicting the celebrated stars of the stage. She had rare portraits of Hogarth, Aldridge, Rachel, Mlle. Mors, and Talma. These sessions of the students

alarmed Makarov very much, and moved Uncle Chrysanth, who felt himself a participant of great events in their burgeoning. He was unshakingly convinced that when Nicholas II ascended the throne great events would inevitably follow.

"There — you'll see, you'll see!" he would say mysteriously to the irritated young people, and would blink the buttons of his eyes into the red buttonholes of his eyelids. "He'll fool everybody; just give him a chance to look about him! Don't you pay any attention to his eyes — the mirror of his soul. Study his face closely!"

And he jested:

"Eh, Diomidov! If you'd only grow a small beard, and clip your curls a bit, you'd be all set for the rôle of a pretender — all set!"

XVI

I

CLIM SAMGHIN was very well pleased with his decision not to study that winter. The university was in a state of alarm. The students had ridiculed the historian Kluchevski. They had insulted several other professors as well. The police went about breaking up meetings. Forty-two liberal professors went into pouting sulks, and eighty-two of them declared that serious steps would have to be taken and a firm rule established.

Varvara was going through the shops of the antiquaries and art dealers searching for a portrait of Madame Roland, and was very sorry that there was no portrait of Torjuan De Mericourt.

In general, life was taking on a rather troublesome aspect, and Clim Samghin was ready to acknowledge that Uncle Chrysanth was correct in his premonitions. A few figures he met that winter were especially firmly wedged into Clim's memory.

Once Samghin was standing in the Kremlin studying the chaotic piling up of the houses in the city, festally illuminated by the sun of a winter noon. The slight frost nipped his ears mischievously; the sparkling of snowflakes blinded his eyes. The roofs, muffled in thick layers of silvery down, lent the city a cosy air. It was easy to imagine that under those roofs, in radiant warmth, happy, delightful people were dwelling in close comradeship.

"Greetings," said Diomidov, taking Clim by his elbow. "What a dreadful city," he continued, with a sigh. "It isn't so bad to

look at while it's winter, but in the summer it's completely impossible. When you walk through the street you feel that something heavy is creeping up on you from behind, about to fall on you. And the people here are cruel; also they're braggarts! "

He sighed again and said:

" I don't like it when they start in ah'ing: 'Ah, Moscow!' "

Diomidov's face, glowing rosily with the frost, seemed more a picture than ever. His cap was rather old, of seal fur, and too small for his curly head. His overcoat was threadbare, with buttons that did not match, and his pockets were torn and bulging out.

" Where are you going? " Clim asked.

" I'm going to have dinner." He jerked his head in the direction of the chapel of the Monastery of the Miracle.

" I'm repairing an ikonostasis there."

" So that's the way you do! You work both in the theatre and the church! "

" Well, what of it? It's work, just the same. A certain wood carver and gilder of my acquaintance invited me. A remarkable fellow." Diomidov frowned and was silent for a while, and then proposed:

" Let's go to an inn. It's not good enough for you, but they do serve good tea."

Clim rather wanted to talk with Diomidov, but he didn't like at all the idea of going about with such a tattered fellow. A student by the side of an artisan — they would be a suspicious pair. Clim refused to go to the tavern, and Diomidov, mercilessly rubbing his frozen ear with his hand, said:

" I'm forever working. I want to save up a lot of money."

And suddenly he asked:

" Do you approve of Lidia Timopheëvna's preparing herself for the theatre? " Without waiting for an answer, he immediately re-

vealed the meaning of his question. "Why, it's like going about naked on the street."

"Lidia Timopheëvna is fully grown-up," Clim reminded him dryly.

Diomidov nodded his head affirmatively.

"In my opinion, clever people are the ones most frequently mistaken in themselves."

"Why do you think so?"

"Well, how else should one think? I read books, I observe."

This seemed impudent to Samghin. Here was an ignoramus, who could not speak correctly, and yet he, too, had pretensions.

"Well, what do you read?"

"All sorts of things. Everybody's writing about mistakes." Stamping his foot, he asked: "Are you taking any part in the revolution?"

"No," Clim answered, looking straight into Diomidov's eyes and remarking that their blue was especially rich that day.

"Well, you act as though you were; you're so secretive."

"Why does this interest you?"

"When people talk to me like that, I know that they're telling the truth," Diomidov muttered thoughtfully. "Of course it's the truth; for what else should it be?"

He waved a hand in the direction of the city.

"And yet, even though I know, I don't believe. I always have a contradictory feeling."

"One doesn't speak of the revolution in the street," remarked Clim, looking about him nervously.

"This isn't the street. By the way, would you like to have me show you an interesting chap?" he proposed.

"What sort of chap?"

"You'll see. A remarkable fellow. He holds forth on Saturdays."

"About the revolution?"

"According to my way of thinking, about something still worse," Diomidov answered, but not immediately. Clim smiled.

"You're an amusing fellow!"

"Let's go!" very softly, but persistently, Diomidov was saying, trying to convince him. "Today is Saturday. Only you ought to dress yourself as simply as possible. Although it's all the same; even people dressed as you are show up. The district police inspector himself is there. And a certain deacon."

Through the caressing glance of this amusing chap it was evident that he wanted very much to have Samghin go with him, and that he was already certain that Samghin would go.

"It's terribly interesting. It's something one must know," he said. "As for the eyeglasses, take them off; people in eyeglasses aren't in favour."

Clim wanted to refuse to be in the same audience with the district chief of police, at a meeting for something worse than revolution, but curiosity overpowered his cautiousness. There immediately rose in his mind still other consideratons, not altogether clear, and he heard himself saying:

"Let me have the address; I'll probably come."

"I'd better drop in for you, and take you there."

"No, don't put yourself out."

2

In the evening Clim, uncertain of his way, was wandering through the lanes about the Sukharevaya Tower. The moon shed its light generously; the frost had increased. Sombre-coloured people rapidly flitted before him, their hands thrust into their sleeves and pockets; their hideously distorted shadows leaping

over the snowdrifts. The air trembled like a crystal from the ringing of innumerable bells, summoning all to the night mass.

"I'm curious: In what a milieu does this half-wit live?" reflected Clim. "Should anything happen, the worst I may expect would be being sent out of Moscow. Well, what of it? I'll be a martyr. That's all the rage."

There, at last, over some old gates was a sign, bent like a yoke: CIDER HOUSE. Samghin entered the yard, closely piled up with mounds of baskets, covered with snow. Here and there, through the snow, the bottoms and necks of bottles stuck out. The light of the moon, reflected in the dark glass, glittered like a multitude of formless eyes.

In the depth of the yard rose a long building of brick, which seemed to have sunk into the ground. It was — or tried to be — two-storeyed; two-thirds of the second storey had been broken off, or had never been finished. A door as broad as a gate made the lower floor look like a barn; in the remnant of upper storey two windows glimmered dully; under them, in the lower storey, a square window blazed as brightly as though a bonfire were burning behind its pane.

Clim Samghin knocked at the door with his foot, anxious to get out of the yard. An unnoticeable narrow little wicket opened in the door and an unseen person said in a stifled voice, with a careful emphasis on the vowels:

"Be careful. There are four steps."

Then Samghin found himself at the threshold of another door, dazzled by the bright flame of an oven. The oven was enormous, and two cauldrons had been set into its clay.

"Well, now, pass through," said a stout woman with heavy black hair on her lips and chin, wiping her hands with her apron.

In the semi-basement under an arched ceiling it was murky and there was a dank warmth, saturated with the stifling odour of spoiled meat and manure. Near the oven, in a wooden trough for washing linen, tripe was soaking. Another trough exactly like it was filled with bloody lumps of liver and lungs. Along the wall were six bunks, and at the end of the row of them, in a corner on a box, was seated a fellow in a grey under-cassock. His back and the nape of his neck leaned against the wall, with his long thin legs, like those of a camel, stretched out before him. When he saw Clim he stretched his long neck forward and asked in a deep bass voice:

"A druggist?"

"Why do you take me for a druggist?" Clim asked in annoyance.

"From your outward appearance, of course. Do sit down — here."

Clim sat down opposite him on the broad, crude sleeping shelf, rudely knocked together out of four boards. In one corner of the shelf lay a heap of belongings — somebody's bedding. A large table before the sleeping shelf gave forth a sickening odour of rancid fat. Behind a wooden partition that was unpainted and full of knot-holes, glowed a light. Someone was coughing there, and rustling papers. The woman with the hairy lips lit a tin lamp, put it on the table, and, having glanced at Clim, said to the deacon:

"A stranger."

The deacon kept silent for a while. Then he asked Samghin:

"Who called you here?"

"Diomidov."

"A-a! Sanya. He's De-midov."

She went toward the oven, sniffing at her hands. Then, halting, she asked:

"Didn't he say that the fellow who'd come would wear eyeglasses?"

"I've my eyeglasses with me."

"Very well, then."

Clim took his eyeglasses from his pocket, put them on, and saw that the deacon was past forty and that his face was like those on the icons of holy desert anchorites. Even more often such faces are to be seen on traders in second-hand things, in pettifoggers and misers. As a matter of fact, the memory creates an annoying image of a seemingly immortal Russian being from a multitude of similar faces.

Two people entered. One was broad-shouldered, shaggy, with a curly beard and a vague smile frozen on it, a smile which might have indicated either intoxication or derision. A tall chap with black moustaches and a pointed beard halted near the stove to warm himself. Presently a young woman with a little kerchief pulled down over her very eyebrows slipped in silently. Then, one following the other, four more came. They crowded near the oven, without going up to the table. In the gloom it was difficult to distinguish them. They all kept silent, stamping and scraping on the brick floor with their feet. Only the smiling fellow spoke in a half-whisper to somebody:

"Even one of the gentry has come — an *antiligend!*"

3

Clim felt that he was stifling in this noxious air, in this nightmarish setting. He wanted to leave. Finally Diomidov ran in, looked everybody over and greeted Clim:

"Aha, you've come?" as he hastily passed behind the partition.

A minute later a dwarfish fellow stepped importantly from behind the partition. He wore a small dishevelled beard and his

face was drab and insignificant. He was clad in a woman's quilted jacket and felt boots that came up to his knees. The grey hair on his head was greased, and lay down evenly. In one hand he held a narrow, long book, of the kind which is used by storekeepers to write down things given out on credit. Walking up to the table he said to the deacon:

"Don't you argue with me."

He sat down, opened his book, and, glancing at Samghin, asked Diomidov:

"Is that the fellow?"

"Yes."

"Well, greetings to you!" the little fellow said, turning to him. His voice was sonorous; it had an unexpectedly commanding ring. Half of his left hand was missing; there remained on it only three fingers, the thumb, the index, and the middle. These fingers gathered themselves in a bunch, in the Nikonian sign of the cross.[45] He turned the narrow pages of the closely written book with his right hand while with his left hand he ceaselessly outlined intricate designs in the air. There was a nervousness in his gestures that belied the calmness of his voice.

"On this evening I wanted to go on for you with my teaching, but since a new man has come, it's necessary to tell him in brief my conclusions," he announced, scrutinizing his auditors with colourless and bleary eyes.

"Fire away! We'll listen," the smiling fellow said, and sat down beside Clim.

The preacher glanced into his book and continued very calmly, as though he were telling about something ordinary and long known to everybody:

"My teaching, sir, is in full agreement with science and the works of Leo Tolstoi. Nothing harmful is contained in my teaching. Everything is very simple: this universe of ours is all of

it the work of human hands. Our hands are clever, whereas our pates are stupid; and hence, precisely, comes all the sorrow of life."

Clim glanced at the people. They were all sitting quietly; his neighbour, bending over, was rolling a cigarette. Diomidov had disappeared. The water in the cauldrons was coming to a boil, gurgling. The woman with the moustaches was washing the tripe. The damp wood in the oven was hissing; the fire in the lamp quivered and leapt upward, dimming the broken lamp-chimney with soot. In the murk the people seemed unreal and unnaturally large.

"What is the significance of this universe, if one is to look at it correctly?" asked the man, and drew a loop in the air with his three fingers. "The universe is the earth, the air, the water, the stone, the tree. Without man, all this would not be at all necessary."

Clim's neighbour, having lit his cigarette, asked:

"And how do you, Yakov Platonich, know what is necessary and what isn't?"

"If I didn't know that it's so, I wouldn't say anything. As for you, don't you interfere. If all of you here start in teaching me, it will be a very trifling matter. And amusing. There are many of you, and the pupil will be only one. No, you'd better learn; and as for teaching, I'll attend to it."

"Ain't he good?" his smiling neighbour whispered to Clim, puffing warm smoke on Clim's cheek.

The teacher continued calmly in a measured tone:

"The stone is a fool. And the tree is a fool. And every growth leads to naught, if man does not exist. But if our hands do but touch this senseless material, we have houses convenient to live in; we have roads, bridges, and all sorts of things — machines, and diversions like checkers, or cards, and brass music. That's

that. I, formerly, was a sectarian — a Siutaevetz; but later I began penetrating into the real philosophy of life, and penetrated through and through, with the aid of an unknown person."

"'The gentleman who has a habit of explaining things,'" Clim recalled.

Through the gloom of the room Clim saw a face which was pitted with smallpox as if with a charge of grapeshot, and a voice, hoarse from a cold, requested:

"If you'd only say something about God, now."

Yakov Platonovich lifted the lamp with his three-fingered hand, squinted across at the questioner, and said:

"I'm teaching here. I know when it's God's turn."

Then he turned to Samghin again:

"It's proved by scholars that God depends on the climate, on the weather. Where the climates are temperate there the God also is kindly; whereas in hot and cold places the God is cruel. This must be understood. Today there'll be no teaching about that."

The philosopher resolutely plunged into his book, turning its leaves.

"He's afraid of you," Clim's neighbour whispered in his ear, and began spitting on the butt of his cigarette.

Samghin felt ill, deprived of his reason, thrust into a bad dream. If anyone had told him about what he was seeing and hearing, he would not have believed it. The water boiled angrily in the kettles, filling the basement with an oppressively odorous steam. The woman with the hair on her lips was slapping the black pieces of liver and lungs in the troughs and rinsing the pieces of tripe, which she turned inside out, like dirty socks. She reminded Clim of a she-bear as she bustled about, bending over. Someone snored near the oven, dragged his legs over the floor, and loudly knocked his head against the partition. The

preacher, having glanced at him from under his palm, said neither smilingly nor angrily:

"Save that pate of yours; it may be of some use yet."

His three-fingered hand, resembling the claw of a lobster, fluttered over the table. It gave one an eerie and unpleasant feeling. It was also disagreeable to see his flat face half hidden in the murk, and the creases on it, in which dully glittered the tipsy eyes. Clim's indignation was aroused by his self-assured tone, by his palpable contempt for his audience, and by their submissive silence.

"From the King of Heaven we shall come down to the earthly. . . ." After a moment's silence, the teacher scratched his beard and ended: "matters."

Clim's communicative neighbour whispered joyously:

"He's going to start in about Czar Hunger."

"We all live according to the law of competition with one another; in that, precisely, is revealed our chief stupidity."

His words, as blunt as the blows of an axe, made Clim reflect ironically:

"If only Kutuzov might hear him."

And yet it was offensive to see how this cellar dwarf was hideously and daringly exposing the familiar, even though inimical, course of Kutuzov's thought.

"Let us take, to make it plain to the eye and mind, a happening such as this: There come to the young Czar certain simple-hearted people who propose to him: 'You, Your Majesty, ought to choose from among the people clever men, to discuss with them how to arrange our life better.' But he answers them: 'This is a meaningless enterprise.' And the liquor traffic is all in his hands. Also all sorts of imposts. That's what we have to think about."

"Ain't he good?" reiterated Clim's neighbour. Rubbing his hands hard, he added:

"He's as good as a prime minister, the son of a gun!"

"Do you believe him?"

"Well, why shouldn't one believe? He gives you the truth straight from the shoulder."

After talking for another ten minutes the teacher took from his pocket his black watch, balanced it, closed the book, and, slamming it on the table, arose.

"That'll do for today! Reflect on it."

A buzz of talk arose; the pock-marked fellow said loudly:

"Thanks to you, Yakov Platonovich."

Yakov, nodding to him twice, sniffed, and puckering up his face, complained:

"Glaphyra! I've already told you: don't soak the tripe in hot water. There's no good in that — only a stink."

As Samghin was going to the door, his host came up to him and seized him by the elbow, saying:

"There, my dear sir, my sister is fabricating food for the poor — an aromatic food, eh? There you are! Yet in the meanwhile, in Testov's eating place. . . ."

"Excuse me, it's time for me to be going," Clim cut him short.

4

Plunging out into the bitter cold of the street, he took as deep a breath as he possibly could. His head began to turn and everything grew green before his eyes. The squat little old houses and the snow drifts, the desolate sky over them and the icy moon — everything for a minute appeared greenish, covered with mould and rotted. Samghin hurried along, shaking himself in order to drive away the nauseating odour of spoiled meat. It was not yet late; the night mass was just over. Clim decided to drop in at Lidia's to tell her everything he had seen and heard, to share his

indignation with her. She must know in what a milieu Diomidov lived, and comprehend that a friendship with him was not without danger for her. But when, sitting in her room, he began ironically to express his impressions, the girl, somewhat wonderingly, brusquely interrupted him:

"But I know all this. I was there. It seems to me that I told you that I'd been at Yakov's. Why, Diomidov lives right there with him, up above. Do you remember? 'For the flesh cries out —Why do I live?'"

Bending and unbending a hairpin, she continued thoughtfully:

"Of course, all this is very primitive, contradictory. But then everything, according to my opinion, is an echo of those contradictions which you are observing here. It seems to be one and the same thing all over."

As the hairpin broke, she added very quietly:

"Up above they shout; down below they listen and interpret after their own fashion. I can't understand what you're so wrought up about."

Her calm tone had considerably cooled Clim's indignation.

"As for me, I can't understand what you are infatuated with in Diomidov," he muttered.

Lidia glanced at him, contracting her eyebrows.

"I like him."

Clim was silent, listening inwardly and awaiting the moment when jealousy would begin to speak within him.

"Sometimes I regret that he's older than I am by two years: I'd like to have him five years younger than myself. I don't know why that's so. You see, I'm always silent," he heard her thoughtful and steady voice. "It seems to me that if I were to say what I think, it would be horrible! And funny. I'd be driven out. Driven out, most assuredly. I can speak with Diomidov about everything just as I like."

"And not with me?" Clim asked.

Lidia closed her eyes and sighed:

"You are brainy, but you don't understand anything. Those who do not understand are more to my liking than those who do, but you — in your case, that isn't so. You criticize well; but that's become your trade. One feels bored with you. I think that you, too, will become bored soon."

Jealousy refused to appear, but Samghin felt that his timidity with Lidia, and his feeling of dependence upon her, were vanishing. Staidly, in the tone of an older person, he began:

"It's fully understandable that it's time for you to love, but love is a real emotion, and this lad, now, is merely an invention of yours."

"You've the character of a schoolmaster," Lidia said with evident vexation, and even with a jeer, as Samghin thought. "When you say: 'I love you' it sounds just as if you had said: 'I love to teach you.'"

"So that's it," Clim muttered, forcing himself to smile. "Yet it seems to me that you're inclined to think you can behave like a teacher toward Diomidov."

Lidia did not answer. Samghin sat on for a few minutes, then said a brief goodbye and went away. He was agitated; but he reflected that it might have been pleasanter for him if he had been even more agitated than he was.

5

At home, on a table, Clim found a thick letter, unstamped, unaddressed, with only a brief inscription on the envelope: C. I. Samghin. Brother Dmitri was informing him that he had been transferred to Ustug; he requested that some books be sent to him. The letter was brief and to the point; the list of books was

long and written with a tiresome accuracy, with detailed titles, names of publishers, years and places of issues; the majority of the books were in the German language.

"He's an accountant," reflected Clim derisively. He glanced into a mirror, immediately wiped the sneer from his face, and saw that his altered features were responsive and more shapely. He drank a glass of milk, undressed neatly, and lay down in bed feeling suddenly sorry for himself. Before his eyes arose the figure of the youth of the "comely visage"; memory prompted the latter's awkward speeches: "I've a different feeling!"

"Perhaps I, too, am possessed of 'another emotion,'" reflected Samghin, trying to console himself. "I'm not a romantic," he continued vaguely, feeling that somewhere close at hand was a path of consolation. "It's silly to become offended at a girl because she's not rightly appreciative of my love. She's found a wretched hero for her romance. She'll derive no good from him. It's fully possible that she'll be cruelly punished for her infatuation; and thereupon I. . . ."

He did not conclude his thought, feeling a slight attack of contempt for Lidia. This greatly comforted him. He fell asleep feeling assured that the knot which bound him to Lidia had been loosened. Clim even reflected drowsily through his sleep:

"But was there really a boy? Perhaps there wasn't any boy at all!"

But no later than next morning he comprehended that things were not really in such a state. Beyond the window the sun shone splendidly; the bells were raising a festal din. But all this was tiresome inasmuch as the "boy" existed. One felt this with perfect clarity. With overwhelming force, and as if illuminated by the sun, a vivid memory returned: Lidia Varavka was sitting on the window sill; and on his knees before her, he was kissing her legs. What a stern face was hers at that moment, and how amaz-

ingly alight her eyes were. At moments she could be irresistibly handsome. It was insulting to think that Diomidov. . . .

With these humiliating thoughts he lived until evening, when Makarov came in unexpectedly, unbuttoned and dishevelled, with swollen face and red eyes. It seemed to Clim that even Makarov's well-shaped, strong ears had become limp, and hung down exactly like a poodle's. He reeked of the tavern, but was sober.

" Volodka arrived from Kubana, and has been drinking like a fish for three days now," he told Clim, rubbing his temples with his fingers and smoothing down his streaked locks. " I commiserated with him, but I can't go on any longer! Yesterday a deacon, a friend of his, came to visit him and I left. But I'm going there again right now. Vladimir alarms me; he's a fellow of unexpected impulses. Do you want to come along with me? He would be glad. He says you're like a colon because you're always followed by something — no one knows what it may be but it's sure to be something original. You'll make the acquaintance of the deacon — an interesting type! Perhaps you can make Volodka cool down a bit. Coming along? "

Clim was curious to see the sufferings of a man whom he disliked.

" I'll probably get drunk," he reflected, " and Makarov will tell Lidia about it."

6

An hour later he was pacing the glistening floor of an empty room, past mirrors in the spaces between five windows, past chairs decorously and bleakly placed along the walls. From those walls two faces looked down at him disapprovingly: one, that of an angry fellow with a red ribbon around his neck and a yellow medal below his beard; the other, that of a rosy woman with eyebrows finger-thick and a protruding lower lip.

Presently he and Makarov were led up an inner staircase that was narrow and dark to a dusky room with a low ceiling and two windows. In a corner the tin revolving fan of the ventilator squeaked occasionally as it fanned into the room a swirl of frosty air.

In the middle of the room Vladimir Liutov stood, in a long nightshirt which reached to his ankles. He clutched a guitar by the tip of its neck, and stood swaying, leaning on it as on an umbrella. He looked closely at his guests as they entered, he breathed heavily. Beneath his unbuttoned shirt his ribs rose and fell with his heavy breathing. It was strange to see that he was so bony.

"Samghin?" he cried questioningly, closing his eyes and opening his arms wide. The guitar, falling to the floor, began humming; the ventilator responded with its squeak.

Clim had no time to elude his embraces. Liutov crushed him, lifting him up and kissing him with his wet burning lips.

"Thanks! I'm very — very. . . ."

He dragged him up to a table laden with bottles and plates, and, pouring out with a trembling hand some vodka into pony glasses, cried out:

"Deacon, come here! This is one of our own crowd."

An unseen door opened in the corner; there entered, grimly smiling, the grey deacon Clim had seen yesterday. In the light of the two large lamps Samghin saw that the deacon had three beards: one long and two which were shorter. The long one grew from his chin, and the two others descended from below the ears, over his cheeks. They were scarcely noticeable on his grey under-cassock.

"Ipatevsky," the deacon pronounced hesitatingly, squeezing Samghin's hand with his bony fingers until it hurt. The old man stooped over slowly and picked up the guitar.

Makarov, closing the ventilator, shouted at the host:

"Are you trying to catch pneumonia?"

"Kostiya, I'm stifling."

Liutov's searching impotent eyes roved over Samghin's face; unable to halt there, they shifted twitchingly to the deacon, who was slowly straightening up, as though afraid that his long, stiff body would crack if he assumed an erect posture too suddenly. Liutov fussed nervously around the table losing the slippers from his bare feet. From time to time he sat down in a chair, lowered his head to his knees, swaying, and replaced a slipper on his foot. His movements were so uncertain that Clim could not understand why he did not fall forward with his head against the floor. Rumpling up the deacon's dove-grey hair with his fingers, Liutov squealed shrilly:

"Samghin! Here's a man for you! Why, not merely a man, but a whole temple! Pray gratefully to the power which creates such men!"

The deacon was tuning the guitar. When it was tuned he got up and carried it into a corner. Clim saw before him a giant with a broad, flat chest, the paws of an ape, and with the bony expressionless face of one who was an innocent for Christ's sake. From the dark pits in his face enormous watery eyes gazed abstractedly.

As he handed out four large glasses of vodka, Liutov declared:

"Old Polish stuff! It never fails to knock you down! I propose that we drink to the health of Alena Markovna Telepneva, my quondam bride. She — she refused me, Samghin! She refused to lie with her soul and body. I respect her deeply, sincerely — Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" the deacon echoed in a sepulchral bass.

7

After two glasses of unusually tasty vodka, both the deacon and Liutov seemed less hideous to Clim. Liutov was not really drunk; he was agitated, emotionally aroused to the verge of fury. Something akin to frenzy glowed in his squinting eyes. He looked about him questioningly. At times his high-pitched voice sank suddenly, as though from fright, to a whisper.

"Kostiya! I ask you: Mustn't one have a good soul in order to turn down great riches?"

Makarov, smiling, would shove him toward the divan and try to placate him:

"You sit down; sit there peacefully."

"Hold on! I represent great riches and nothing more! And I'm also a victim, whom history immolates to herself for the sins of our fathers."

He halted in the middle of the room, waved his arms, and raised them above his head like a swimmer about to dive.

"Some day there will be living on this earth a just humanity. And, on the squares of its cities, it will erect monuments of amazing beauty, and will inscribe upon them. . . ."

He gasped, blinked rapidly, and squealed:

"It will inscribe: 'To our precursors, who perished for the sins and the errors of their fathers.' That's what it'll do!"

Clim observed Liutov's legs trembling under his shirt, and expected to see tears spring from his agonized eyes. But this did not happen. After his explosion of desperate rapture, Liutov seemed suddenly to sober up. He became calmer, and, yielding to Makarov's persuasions, sat down on the divan, mopping his face with his sleeve. His face had begun to sweat copiously. Clim thought that the merchant's son was suffering quite amusingly; he neither liked nor pitied him, but felt an impulse

to tease him, to see in what other direction this man could leap and cast himself about. He sat down on the divan beside Liutov.

"You said that very well, about the monuments."

Lutov, tossing his head, studied him with his enflamed eyes; he began to rock, smoothing his knees with his palms.

"They'll erect monuments," he said with conviction. "Not out of mercy; there'll be no place for mercy then, because there'll be no sufferings. The monuments will be erected out of a love for the unusual beauty of the truth of the past; they'll comprehend and appreciate this beauty."

The deacon, near the table, teaching Makarov to play on the guitar, was saying in his thick bass:

"Crook your fingers a little more; make 'em very much more crooked."

"You'll pardon me," Clim began, "but I have observed that Alena is not at all a clever girl."

Liutov's movements ceased; he sat hunched up, his head bowed, as he replied:

"The feminine element within her is clever."

"It seems to me she's incapable of understanding for what one should be loved," Clim persisted.

"What has 'for what' to do with it?" Liutov asked, throwing himself abruptly against the back of the divan and looking in Clim's face with a searing glance. "'What for' is of the intellect. The intellect is opposed to love, opposed to any sort of love. When it is overcome by love it is apologetic: 'I love her because of her beauty, because of her dear eyes; I love one who is foolish for her foolishness.' One can christen foolishness with another name. Foolishness has a multitude of names."

He jumped up, went over to the deacon, seized him by his shoulders, and begged:

"Igor, read to us about the unchangeable rouble. Right now — Please!"

"Before a stranger?" the deacon questioned, glancing at Clim. "Although, I believe we've already met."

Clim smiled amiably.

"Since my youth I have been possessed by a passion for versifying, but am ashamed before men who are enlightened, realizing my own humble state."

The deacon did everything slowly, with a ponderous cautiousness. Having copiously sprinkled a bit of bread with salt, he placed upon it a circlet of onion, and lifted up the bottle of vodka with the same deliberate effort with which one would raise a dumb-bell weighing two *pouds*. As he poured the liquid into a glass he narrowed one enormous eye; the other, pop-eyed, looked like a pigeon's egg. Having drunk the vodka, he opened his mouth and uttered a reverberating:

"H-ho!"

Before putting the bread and onion into his mouth, he expanded the nostrils of his long nose and sniffed at the bread as one might sniff a flower.

8

Liutov was standing with his right hand uplifted in warning; his left hand nervously stroked his small uneven beard. Makarov, sitting near the table, was smearing a white loaf with caviar, in deep concentration. Clim Samghin, on the divan, was smiling, expecting something indecent and amusing.

"Well, now," the deacon said, and began pensively, dragging out his words:

Sleep would not come to the Lord Jesus,
And over the stars went the Lord a-strollin'

Over the heavenly, the golden road,
From one star to another little star a-steppin
And as company for our Lord Jesus,
There were Nikolai, the holy Bishop of Myra,
And Thomas the Apostle — just these two; no others.

It was difficult to hear him. His voice had a muffled, churchly sound. He smothered and drawled out his words, making them indistinct. Liutov, with his elbows pressed to his sides, was directing him with both hands, as though he were lulling a baby.

And the Lord he thinketh great thoughts;
He looks down below — there the earth's a-twirlin';
There's a little black ball, a-spinnin' like a whippin-top;
'Tis the devil with an iron chain that whips it.

"Well?" Liutov asked, winking to Clim.

"Don't interrupt," Makarov said.

Clim was still smiling with assurance, expecting something funny. The deacon's wide eyes were fixed on a dark engraving in a golden frame on the wall as he rumbled on:

"I have been there," Christ did then say sadly;
But Apostle Thomas, smiling, did remind him:
"I guess we all come from there."
Christ, he looked a while at the earthly darkness,
Then he put a question to the Saint Nikola:
"Who is that a-lyin' there, down by the road-side —
Is he drunken, now; is it sleepin' he is, or is it that he's slain?"
"Nay," the Saint Nikola did to him make answer.
"That's just, simply, Vasska Kaluzhanin,
Lost in dreams of a good life."

Closing his eyes, Liutov shook his dishevelled head and laughed quietly. Makarov poured out two hookers of vodka. One he drained himself; the other he handed to Clim.

Thereupon dear Christ, dreamily indulgent,
To the earth descended, a dove's form assumin'.
He arose 'fore Vasska, and he asketh Vasska:
"I am Christ — dost know me thou, Vassili?"
Vasska fell in his knees down before God's visage.
He was moved in spirit; he was almost weeping.
"Lordy!" he doth mutter, "There is a come-uppance!
Why, we did not even think thou wouldst come this day!
How was it thou didst not tell me of it early?
I'd have knocked together a crowd for to meet thee,
We would have a-met thee with the bells a-ringin',
With the whole Zhizdrinsky district, now, a-troopin'!"
Jesus he did smile, though his small beard hid it,
And with great love to the mouzhik *spake he:*
"Why, I have come for a short while only,
For to learn, Vassya, what it is thou wantest."

Liutov extended his left hand toward Samghin, and, directing the deacon with his right, whispered sibilantly:

"Listen!"

Vasska Kaluzhanin simply let his mouth drop,
Simply stunned with gladness was this our Vassili;
And thereafter, gulping down his spittle, to the Lord he whispers:
"Do thou, Lord, but give me, just one whole coin,
Thou knowest — such a little rouble that could never be changed:
No matter how one spend it, yet spent it never will be,
No matter how one change it — changed it never will be!"

"That's genial!" Liutov shouted, and shook his hands as though he were throwing something off them under the deacon's feet. The deacon arched his brows sorrowfully, moved his triple beard, and continued:

"No moneys have I got now — not upon my person,
The moneys are with Thomas, who is now the bursar —
He is now a-takin' the place that Judas once held. . . ."

Liutov was no longer able to listen. He hopped about, twisted, lost his slippers, and stamped with his bare feet, shouting:

"How is that? Eh? How-is-that?"

Raising his face and his clenched fist toward the ceiling, he sang in a snuffling voice like an old subdeacon's:

"'Do give me an unchangeable little rouble, Lord!' No — but what do you think of Thomas, now? Thomas the skeptic taking the place of Judas — Eh?"

"Stop your convulsions, Volodka," Makarov said roughly and loudly, pouring out some vodka. "That's enough of frenzy!"

Liutov tore himself away from the deacon, whom he had been embracing, leaped at Makarov, and threw his arms about him.

"Are you still troubling about my dignity? There's no need of that, Kostiya. I know there's no need of it. Who the devil needs my dignity? What'll I do with it? 'Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn,' Kostiya!" [46]

Samghin was nonplused. He saw that Makarov's handsome face was grim, that his teeth were tightly clenched, and his eyes moist.

"You seem to be crying?" he asked with a hesitant smile.

"Well, what am I to do? Laugh? Brother, this isn't at all funny," Makarov said harshly. "That is, it is funny! Yes — Drink! You questioner! What the devil. We Russians, it seems,

are only capable of drinking vodka, and with insane words break up, distort everything, and eerily laugh at our own selves and everything in general."

He made a gesture of despair.

9

Clim felt awkward. From the vodka he had drunk and the strange verses of the deacon he suddenly experienced an influx of sadness; transparent and light, like the blue air of a sunny day in late autumn, though not depressing, it made one wish to greet everybody with pleasant words. And so he uttered them, standing with his glass in his hands, opposite the deacon, who, bent over, was looking under his feet.

"That's a very original thing of yours, and unexpected. I confess I expected something comic."

The deacon straightened up. His face turned a livid hue, and was lit up by the smile of his almost colourless eyes.

"The comic element is also present in it; for it is a long composition of eighty-six stanzas. One can't do without the comic; it wouldn't be true. Take me, now. I've certainly buried more than a thousand people, and yet I don't remember a single funeral without a comic incident. It would be more correct to say that I remember only the comic ones. For even on the most woeful of paths do we stumble against the funny—that's the kind of folk we are!"

Falling down in a heap on the divan, Liutov implored:

"Leave me be, Kostiya! Give us the riot scene, Kostiya."

"It's a riot of peasant women," explained the deacon. "Hysterics. Go soak your head in cold water, Liutov."

Makarov easily raised his friend to his feet and led him away, and the deacon, in answer to Clim's question as to what Vasska

Kaluzhanin had done with the unchangeable rouble, told him pensively:

"Christ returned to Heaven, managed to beg a whole rouble from Thomas, and threw it down to Vasska. Vassili went off on a drunk, launched out on a spree — Of course, how else should it be? —

So Vassiyaga swills and guzzles and seduces wenches,
And presents accordeons to all of the young lads;
He drags the old men about by their beards,
He yells his lungs out all over the Kalutzka region;
"I do spit upon all of ye earthly people.
If I will, I sin; if I will, I am saved!
'Tis all one. For me are the doors of Heaven open;
Christ's my bosom crony!"

"And Nikita, the dreadful Volga robber, having learned whence Vasska had gotten his unchangeable rouble, did steal from him the coin, did climb, in thieves' manner, up to Heaven, and say to Christ: 'Thou, Christ, didst not do the right thing; I, because of a rouble, commit great sins every week, whereas thou didst give it to a worthless fellow, a roisterer. That ain't right, at all, at all!'"

Liutov entered, his head wet and combed smoothly; he had put on trousers and a *kossovorotka* blouse.

"The end, the end — tell him the end!" he shouted.

The deacon smiled:

"Why, I am telling it! Christ agreed with Nikita: 'Right you are,' says he, 'I did make a mistake through my simplicity. Thanks to thee for that thou hast set matters to rights, even though thou art a robber. Everything on thy earth,' says he, 'has become so muddled up that it's impossible to make head or tail of anything, and mayhap thou speakest the truth. It's playing

right into Satan's hand: kind-heartedness and simplicity are worse than thieving.' But nevertheless Christ complained when he was saying goodbye to Nikita: 'Ye lead bad lives,' says he, 'ye have forgot me entirely.' But Nikita ups and says:

"Christ! Be thou not angry at us poor folk,
Ne'er are we forgetful of thy sweet self, Jesus,
Even when we hate thee, still we do but love thee;
Even in our hatred we are but thy servants."

The deacon heaved a noisy sigh and said:

"That's the end."

"No one can understand this!" Liutov shouted. "No one! All these cold-blooded European outlanders will never understand the Russian deacon Igor Ipatievsky, who has been on trial for scoffing and blasphemy because of his love for God! They could never understand!"

"That's true. I love God very much," the deacon said simply and assuredly. "Only my demands toward him are strict. He's not man; there's nothing to pity him for."

"Hold on! But what if he — does not exist?"

"They that do affirm this err."

Makarov intervened.

"God does not exist, Father Deacon," he said, also with much assurance. "There is no God, because everything is stupid!"

Liutov was squealing, egging on the disputants, and saying to Samghin:

"Do you know what charges he was brought up on? He has a poem in which the Mother of God, conversing with the devil, reproaches him: 'Wherefore didst thou betray me to weak Adam, when I was Eve — Wherefore? For if I had lived with thee I would have peopled the earth with angels!' How's that?"

Clim heard both his excited, piping voice, and the deacon's muffled bass:

"Of course, 'tis like thunder-voiced brass trumpeting when puny man calls the universe stupid. But, just the same, it's funny."

"Woman has been created very stupid."

"I agree with you there. In general, flesh, it would seem, is builded upon contradictions; but perhaps this is because the paths of its blending with the spirit are as yet unknown to us."

"You churchmen mock women."

Liutov was nudging Clim, crying out ecstatically:

"Who'd ever dare to speak of God as we do?"

Clim Samghin had never reflected seriously about the existence of God; he had never felt the necessity. But now he felt pleasantly tipsy; he wanted music, dancing, gaiety.

"We ought to take a ride somewhere," he proposed.

Liutov slumped onto the divan, tucked his legs under him and asked, smiling:

"To the girlies? But it seems you're engaged? Eh?"

"I? No," Samghin said, and, unexpectedly to himself, added: "The same history as in your case."

As soon as he had uttered the words he was convinced of their absolute truth. Something within him burst, filling him with the fumes of a burning sorrow. He began to sob. Liutov embraced him, and said comforting things to him very softly, uttering Lidia's name tenderly; the room rocked like a boat; on its wall there glistened like a wintry moon the face of a Mauser clock.

"I disliked you very much," Clim was saying, sniffling.

"Everybody dislikes me."

"You're a revolutionist!"

"We're all revolutionists."

"That means that Constantin Leontiev is right: Russia ought to be frozen a bit."

"You fool!" Liutov said, in affright. "In that case she'll explode like a bottle." After a moment he shouted:

"But, however, the devil take 'er! Let 'er explode, and then let there be silence!"

After that all four of them crowded upon the divan. The room seemed cramped. Makarov had filled it with cigarette smoke; the deacon, with the density of his bass. It was difficult to breathe in the room.

"All souls are filled with affronts, and reason is altogether confused."

"Stop right there, deacon!"

"Life is neither a field, nor a desert; there is no place to stop."

The words throbbed at Samghin's temples; they jolted him.

"I'll not permit science to be reviled!" Makarov was shouting.

The deacon stirred and began slowly to disentangle himself. Fascinated, Clim watched the deacon's long black shadow as it moved across the room. Strangely he was convinced that this was the deacon himself. It climbed the wall and, when the head reached the ceiling, broke in two.

"But have you ever heard this?" it cried from above.

Swinging from the ceiling like the tongue of a bell, the head began to roar, to clang:

"To th-them that doubt — the existence of G-God — a-nna-th-thema!"

"Ana-athema! Ana-athema!" piercingly and rapturously Lutov began chanting; the deacon seconded him solemnly and sepulchrally.

"Silence!" Makarov bawled.

The deacon's roaring had deafened Clim and had pushed him off into a dark void; out of it he was aroused by Makarov:

"Get up! It's five o'clock already!"

10

Samghin slowly raised himself and sat up on the divan. He was dressed; only his jacket and his boots had been taken off. The chaos and the odours in the room immediately re-established in his memory the night he had lived through. It was dark. On the table, among the bottles, in a two-coloured flame, burned a candle; the reflection of its flame was incongruously confined within an empty white glass bottle. Makarov was striking matches; they flared up and went out. He leaned to the candle flame, thrust his cigarette into it, extinguishing it, and swore:

"Oh, hell!"

Then he asked:

"Well, what do you think: Has Lidia fallen in love with this idiot?"

"Yes," said Clim, but two or three seconds later added: "Most probably."

"Well, go ahead — wash up."

He succeeded in lighting the candle. Clim noticed that his hands shook. Departing, he paused on the threshold and said quietly:

"Over there, just now, the deacon was reading about the Mother of God, the devil, and Adam, and faint-hearted man. Well done! He's a clever beast, the deacon."

Drawing lines in the air with the burning tip of his cigarette, he declaimed:

"Neither Christ nor Abel is needed for poor mortals,
Mortals stand in need of Prometheus — Antichrist.

That's most aptly put!"

He flung his cigarette to the floor and went out.

A bald old man with a wen on his forehead helped Clim to wash up, and without a word led him down below. There, in a tiny room at a table about a samovar, were seated three men going through their morning-after. The deacon, who had grown still thinner overnight, resembled an apparition. His eyes now no longer seemed to Clim as enormous as they had been yesterday. No, they were the rather ordinary, uncertain and turbid eyes of an elderly drunkard. And his face too, to tell the truth, was nothing out of the usual; one saw such faces all too often. Were he to shave off his triple beard and to clip the undulating sheep's fleece on his head, he would resemble an artisan. The butt of an anecdote. Why, he even spoke in the language of Gorbunov's stories.[47]

"The guitar demands a dreamy character."

"Kostiya, stop worrying that guitar," Liutov said, in the tone of a command rather than a request.

Clim eagerly drank the strong coffee and conjectured: the rôle of Makarov in Liutov's presence was the far from appealing rôle of a toady. It was scarcely possible that this frayed and boorish chatterbox was capable of inspiring anybody with a feeling of sincere friendship. There he was, wagging his tongue again:

"Well, how are we to understand it, Deacon: how are we to understand the fact that you — a Russian born and bred, a being whose soul is most extraordinarily like a crazy quilt — are bored?"

The deacon, sprinkling a piece of rye bread with salt, coughed dully and answered:

"In boredom there's nothing essentially Russian. All men are preoccupied with boredom."

"But what sort of boredom?"

"Even Voltaire was bored."

Immediately an argument blazed up. Liutov, leaping up in his

chair, pounding the table, was screeching; the deacon with perfect *sang-froid* squashed his shouts with ponderous words. Spreading the salt on his bread with a knife, he asked:

"Yes — But is there a Russia, now? In my opinion a Russia as you see it, Vladimir, doesn't exist."

"Ugh, how you've wearied me!" Makarov said, and walked to the window with the guitar. The deacon stubbornly kept pounding away.

"Temples we do have, but a church is absent. The Catholics all believe according to the system of Rome, whereas we believe according to the Synod, according to the Ural, according to the Taurus, and the fiend alone knows how else."

"But why is this? Why is this, Samghin?"

Clim, thrusting his hands in his pockets, began:

"Like every ideology, religious views also. . . ."

"We've heard of that," said the deacon rather rudely. "I, too, have a son who's a Marxist. He gave promise of being a poet, a Nekrassov; but now he asserts that the landless peasant is not capable of believing in the God of a well-to-do *mouzhik*. No, the gist of the matter isn't in that. In very truth, this is the poverty of philosophy. As for an authentic philosophy of poverty, why, Samghin and I heard it three days ago. The philosopher was far from impressive, but it must be said that he most skillfully exposed the very substance of all and sundry relations, revealing the hidden mechanism of our being as massive blood-sucking. Thrice have I heard him, and did dispute also, but could not, however, overcome the fixity of his mind. I can bring my son, now, to a dead stop at his full speed; but as for this chap — I can't do it."

The deacon smiled a broad and approving smile.

"I'm not just talking. I'm an inquisitive person. When I collide with some one of my fellow-men who believes in the simple life,

but who is unsettled in his mind, I do but give him two or three jolts in the direction which is so pleasing to my son — the direction of the Marxists; and it always turns out that the basic tenets of this teaching are already under the skin of such a believer in the simple life."

"Then Marxism is a skin disease?" Liutov cried out in delight.

The deacon smiled.

"No. You see, I said 'under the skin.' Can you imagine my son's joy? For he needs a great deal of spiritual joys, inasmuch as he's deprived of the power for corporeal enjoyment. He suffers from consumption, and his legs do not function. He was arrested in the Astirev affair, and ruined his health in a prison. Ruined it completely, to the verge of death."

Sighing loudly, the deacon proposed, with a shade of bravado:

"Volodya, what do you say to us having a drink bear-fashion?"

Liutov jumped up and ran out, shouting:

"I know, Deacon, but why are we all asundered and a solitary people?"

The deacon smoothed his hair with both hands, tugged at his beard, then said in a low voice:

"Spring is knocking at the door, *messieurs* students."

A piece of thawed ice had fallen from the roof, thundering against the metal of the window casing.

Liutov came running in with a bottle of champagne in his hand. He was followed by a rosy-faced, magnificent chambermaid, also bearing bottles.

"Go to it," he said to the deacon. But as to the reason why Russians are the most solitary people in the universe, he had forgotten to say anything, and no one asked him about it. All three attentively followed the deacon's movements who, in rolling up his sleeves, exposed a none too clean shirt and the strangely white skin of his arms, as smooth as a woman's. He mixed in four

tea-tumblers porter, cognac, and champagne, then sprinkled the foaming fluid with pepper, and proposed:

"Take the Holy Communion!"

Clim drained his glass bravely, although at the first gulp he decided that the drink was repulsive. But he did not want to yield in any way to these people who had so unsuccessfully 'thought themselves up,' who had so irritatingly become entangled in thoughts and words. As he shuddered from the burning liquid there flashed into his mind for the second time the conviction that Makarov would not be able to hold in, and would tell Lidia how he, Clim, had been drinking. Lidia would be bound to feel herself the cause of it. And let her feel that way!

A quarter of an hour later, sitting in a chair, he felt himself flying like a swallow through the room, and heard his voice saying to a three-bearded face with enormous eyes:

"Your ideas seem brilliant to you, and so forth, but they are the most banal of ideas."

"Hold on, Samghin!" Liutov shouted. "Then all of Russia is a banality. All of it!"

"And Christ, whom we seem to love and to hate. You're a very sly fellow. But you're a naïve chap, Deacon. And I don't believe you. I don't believe anybody."

Clim felt aflame. He wanted to say a multitude of disagreeable but incontrovertibly truthful things; he wanted to compel these people to be silent; he even implored them, having tired of being angry:

"We're all of us very simple folk. Lesh live in all shimplicity. Very shimply—like dovesh. In all meeknesh!"

They laughed, they shouted; Liutov drove Clim about the streets in broad sleighs, harnessed with the fastest of horses, and Clim beheld the telegraph poles as they hopped up into the sky, stirring up the stars in it like pieces of orange peel in a bowl of fruit punch. This lasted for four days; and after that Samghin, lying at home in his bed, recalled individual moments of the prolonged nightmare.

More deeply and firmly than everything else had the image of the deacon become engraved on his memory. Samghin felt himself plastered over with his speeches as if with pitch. There was the deacon, standing in the middle of the room with a guitar in his hands, speaking about Liutov, when Liutov, having suddenly tumbled on the divan, had fallen asleep, his mouth as desperately agape as if he were shouting a soundless shout which through this very soundlessness was all the more dreadful:

" He drinks suicidally. Marx is bad for him. My son, too, forces himself to believe in Marx. In him, that is pardonable. He does it because of malice against people, because of his ruined life. Some people believe because of a silly, childish bravado. The little boy is afraid of darkness, but he crawls into it out of shame before his comrades, breaking his will in order to show them: ' I'm no coward now! ' Certain people believe through hastiness, but the majority do so from fear. These latter I do not — now — respect very much."

There he was again — having stopped teaching Makarov to play the guitar — asking Clim:

" But aren't you fond of music? "

Then, without waiting for an answer, he went on day-dreaming, drumming his knees with his fingers:

"If they unfrock me I'm going to work in a glass factory. I'll busy myself with the invention of a glass instrument. For seven years I have been wondering: Why isn't glass used in music? Have you ever heard in winter, when blizzards are raging at night and one can't sleep, how the panes in the windows sing? I probably have listened to this singing for a thousand nights, and I've arrived at the idea that glass, and not brass nor wood, must give us perfect music. All musical instruments must be made out of glass; then shall we obtain a paradise of sound. I'll absolutely take this up."

The deacon's bony face was softened by a dreamy smile, and to Clim Samghin it seemed that the deacon had thought of this on the spur of the moment.

After two or three subsequent meetings with the deacon, Clim had placed him alongside the preacher with the three fingers, the chap who liked it when truth was given 'straight from the shoulder,' the lame fisher of the catfish, the janitor who purposely swept the dust and rubbish of the street into the faces of the convicts, and the little mischievous old man who was a stonemason.

Clim Samghin thought that it would be a good thing if some one, very impressive, even frightful, were to cry out to these people: "What makes you carry on so?"

It was not only these people who needed an awesome shout; Liutov, too, needed it. And many students deserved this shout. But these people of the street, the cellar and a nightmare especially aroused Samghin's indignation with their mischievousness. When, at Uncle Chrysanth's, the gay student Marakuev, seconded by Poyarkov, would begin a noisy contention about the verity of *narodnichestvo* and Marxism with their friend Preiss, a little elegant Jew with a refined face and velvet eyes, Samghin listened to their arguments almost always apathetically, occa-

sionally with irony. In comparison with Kutuzov, who, disliking long speeches, knew how to speak sparingly but incontrovertibly, these people seemed schoolboys, their disputes a game. Their ardent daring seemed intended to attract Varvara and Lidia.

" Every nation is an embodiment of a unique spiritual individuality! " Marakuev would shout, and in his hazel eyes a furious rapture blazed. " Even the tribes of the Romance peoples are sharply differentiated. Every one of them is a distinct psychic entity! "

Poyarkov, trying to speak impressively and calmly, with a gleam in the yellowish whites of his eyes, thrust out his belly against the small Preiss, driving him into a corner, and there wedged him in with his brusque, angry phrases:

" Internationalism is the invention of people who've been denationalized, who are *déclassé*. Throughout the universe the law of evolution reigns, which denies the blending of the unblendable. An American socialist does not recognize the Negro as a comrade. The cypress does not grow in the North. A Beethoven is impossible in China. In the vegetable and animal kingdoms there is no revolution."

12

All such speeches were more or less familiar and customary. They neither frightened nor irritated one, while in Preiss's answers there was even something consoling. In a businesslike way he answered with statistics, and Samghin knew that exact computation was a basic rule in science. In general, Jews did not arouse a friendly feeling in Samghin, but Preiss pleased him. This chap listened calmly to Makaruev's and Poyarkov's speeches. Evidently he deemed them inevitable, like a prolonged autumn rain. He spoke the purest Russian, dryly, in the tone of a profes-

sor who has already become somewhat tired of giving his lectures. In his sturdily constructed phrases, superfluous words, beloved of Russians, were wholly absent. There was nothing flowery, no dandyism; and there was something that seemed older than his years, which was out of keeping with his resounding voice and the steady glance of his velvet eyes. When Marakuev, having blazed up in fireworks, would burn out, and Poyarkov, having exhausted his supply of short, choppy phrases, looked pointblank at Preiss with his variegated eyes, Preiss would say:

"It's possible that all this is very pretty, but it isn't the truth. Indisputable truth does not demand any adornments. It's simple: the entire history of humanity is the history of the struggle of the classes."

Clim Samghin did not feel the necessity of checking up on the truth of Preiss's statements. He did not reflect whether he should accept or reject them. But, feeling himself on the defensive and in a hurry to arrive at conclusions about everything he heard, Clim was already finding a valuable quality in that "Kutuzovishness" which he found unpleasant. "Kutuzovishness" simplified life greatly, dividing people into similar groups strictly bound by lines of fully comprehensible interests. If every man acted according to the will of his class and of his group, then no matter how deftly he concealed his real desires and aims behind the ornate, cunning interlacings of his words, one could always expose his true significance, the force of group and class demands. Possibly it was precisely — and only — "Kutuzovishness" which would permit one to understand — even better than that, to put out of one's life entirely — unreal, nightmarish people such as the deacon, Liutov, Diomidov, and others like them. But at this point there came to his mind a succession of confusing questions and recollections:

"With the interests of what group or what class was the clean, staid Preiss allied?"

He recalled the somewhat malicious question which Turoboev had once asked Kutuzov:

"But what if this class philosophy should not prove to be the key to all the riddles of life, but only a picklock which spoils and breaks locks?"

The deacon's menacing voice boomed in Clim's mind:

"One is compelled to agree with my legless son, who says as follows: Hitherto, revolution has resembled a Spanish picaresque romance — a dangerous but rather pleasant diversion, such as, for example, a bear hunt; but now it has become an affair altogether serious — the ant labour of a multitude of simple folk. This, of course, is a prophecy; however, it's not devoid of meaning. Really, we've breathed an infectious atmosphere, and it's not we alone, the drunkards present here, who serve as a proof of its infectiousness."

The number of such recollections and questions was increasing; they were becoming ever more contradictory and complicated. Feeling it beyond him to make head or tail of this chaos, Clim reflected indignantly:

"But, then, it can't be that I'm stupid?"

He was convinced that he was not stupid because of his ability to distinguish in people what was false, or trashy, or amusing. He felt convinced that his perception was unerring and keen. He had arrived by himself at many convincing conclusions: The students of Moscow drank more than the Peterburgers, and were more ardently infatuated with the theatre. The people of the Volga yielded the greatest number of men of revolutionary tendencies. Poyarkov was undoubtedly very malicious, but, desiring to conceal this fact, smiled unnaturally, and forced himself to be affable. Preiss regarded Russians as Turoboev regarded *mouzhiks*.

If Marakeuv were not so jolly, it would be evident to everybody that he was stupid. Varvara even drank her tea tragically. Uncle Chrysanth was frankly stupid; he himself was aware of it, had declared: "I'm a good man, but without luck. There's a little puzzle for you! Who should have more talent than a good man? — and yet it hasn't been granted me."

As the number of Clim's observations increased, he no longer doubted their correctness. He felt that they were putting him on an ever firmer footing among people. His only difficulty was that other people insisted upon saying the things which should have been said by Samghin himself; everybody was picking his pocket. There was Diomidov, who had said: "The universe is man's foe."

In these five words Clim had heard his own deduction skillfully expressed. He had angrily offered the advice:

"Enter a monastery."

"You don't understand," Lidia had said, glancing at him sternly. Diomidov, covering his face with his hands, had muttered through his fingers:

"A monastery is also a cage."

Clim began to notice that Lidia treated the property man as if he were a child. She looked after him to see that he ate and drank, that he dressed himself more warmly. In Clim's eyes this solicitude degraded her.

For Diomidov was obviously not normal. Samghin had been definitely convinced of this by a strange incident: As he was leaving Lidia's room one night, this joiner and property man started to put on his old, shabby overcoat. He thrust his left arm into its sleeve, but could not locate the right-hand sleeve. Smiling, he struggled with the overcoat, waving it about. Clim offered to help him.

"No, there's no need of that," objected Diomidov. He slipped

the coat from his shoulder, fondly stroked the stubborn sleeve, then drew the coat on without difficulty. As he fastened the buttons, no two of which were alike, he explained:

"It doesn't like strangers' hands. D'you know, inanimate things also have their own characters." He crushed his hat in his hands, and continued:

"They have, to a very great extent. Especially little things, such as one frequently takes into one's hands. Tools, for instance. Some love your hand; others don't. Might as well chuck them away. I, for instance, dislike a certain actress; but she gave me an antique little casket to repair — the most trifling of repairs. You won't believe it, but for a long while I struggled and could not manage it. The casket would not yield. It cut my fingers, or else pinched my skin. I even scalded myself with the glue. And so, after all, I did not repair it, inasmuch as the casket knew that I disliked its owner."

When he had gone Clim asked Lidia what she thought of this.

"He's a poet," said the girl, in a tone that excluded any retort.

Diomidov often spoke about the resistance of objects against man.

"Small things are more intractable than large ones. You may go around a stone, may turn aside from it. But you can't evade dust in a street; you must walk through it. I don't like to make small things," he would sigh, smiling shyly, and one might have thought that this smile was not glowing within his eyes, but was a reflection there of some exterior thing. He also made amusing discoveries:

"If one walks away from a lamp post at night, one's shadow becomes shorter, and at last disappears altogether. Then it seems that I, too, cease to exist."

When Diomidov was with Lidia, Samghin felt worried and annoyed. But jealousy still refused to spring up, although Clim

was still convinced that he loved Lidia. Once he summoned the resolution to say to her:

"Your romanticism will not bring you to any good."

"And what is good?" she asked quietly, frowning into his eyes. Clim shrugged his shoulders and was about to answer, when she said:

"I think that the relations of men and women do not, in general, constitute good. They are inevitable, but there is no good in them. Children? Both you and I were children, but I still can't understand: What need is there for the two of us?"

In the final analysis it appeared to Samghin that he understood excellently everybody and everything — except his own self. And now frequently he caught himself in the act of watching his own self as one would a dangerous person who was but little known to him.

XVII

I

PREPARING to meet the young Czar, Moscow with Asiatic vividness was bedizening herself; she was puttying up the too hideous wrinkles of hers, like a very aged widow on the eve of a new marriage. There was something hectic in the endeavour of the people to paint over the dirt of their dwelling places, as though the Muscovites, having suddenly seen the light, had become frightened, as they beheld the cracks, blotches, and other signs of dirty antiquity on the walls of their houses. Hundreds of painters hurriedly daubed with long brushes the façades of buildings, with acrobatic fearlessness swinging high in the air, suspended on ropes which, seen from afar, seemed the thinnest of threads. On balconies and at the windows of houses drapers were at work hanging motley rugs and Kashmir shawls, creating magnificent frames for the countless portraits of the Czar, adorning his plaster busts with flowers. Everywhere one's eyes were besieged by rosettes, by garlands, by monograms and crowns; the words "God Save the Czar" and "Glory, Glory to Our Russian Czar" were refulgent with gold. Thousands of national flags hung down from the roofs or stuck out of all sorts of crannies, wherever it was possible to thrust in a flagpole.

There prevailed a red colour which irritated with its brightness. Its blatancy was enflamed still more by the effacing submissiveness of white, while the sombre stripes of blue could not soften the blinding blaze of red. Here and there lengths of calico were

hung out of the windows facing the street, and this gave the windows a strange expression, as though quadrangular mouths were teasing each other with their red tongues. Certain houses were so plentifully decorated that they had the appearance of having turned themselves inside out, exposing, in patriotic braggadoccio, their fleshy and fatty viscera. From the rising of the sun until midnight people bustled about the streets. But the birds were even more disquieted. All day long flocks of rooks and pigeons soared over Moscow, restlessly flying from the center of the city to its outskirts, and back again. They were like thousands of little black shuttles darting about in the air, weaving an unseen web. The police diligently despatched suspicious characters out of the city, and inspected even the attics of the houses on those streets through which the Czar was to pass. Marakuev, with a poor pretence of incredulity, informed them that the contract for the illumination of the Kremlin had been undertaken by Kobozev, the self-same cheese-monger from whose shop in Peterburg, on Sadova Street, the mine under the carriage of Alexander II was to have been blown up. Kobozev had arrived in Moscow as the representative of a foreign pyrotechnical firm, and was to blow up the Kremlin on the day of the coronation.

"Of course that sounds like a fairy tale," Marakuev said, smiling. But he studied everybody with the eyes of one who believed that the fairy tale could turn into reality. Lidia angrily warned him:

"Don't you dare even to think of chattering about this before Uncle Chrysanth!"

Uncle Chrysanth had a truly festal appearance. His polished bald spot had a solemn glow, as did his brightly polished boots with patent leather facings. On his flat face smiles of rapture alternated with smiles of confusion. His bright little eyes glowed

warmly like the tiny flames of two holy lamps lit within Uncle Chrysanth's expansive soul.

" Moscow is rejoicing," he muttered, playing with the tassels of his belt. " She's arrayed herself like the lady of a noble. Moscow knows how to rejoice! Just think of it: more than a million *arshins* of calico have been used up! " Then, as if suddenly realizing that a too strenuous rapture was unseemly, he fell to reckoning:

" That represents two hundred and fifty thousand shirts; one could dress an army with that! "

He tried to demonstrate to the young people that he regarded the coming solemnities ironically; but from time to time he would forget his assumed irony and give way to bathos.

" For the second time I am beholding how a great nation meets its young leader," he said, wiping his moist eyes; then suddenly catching himself, he twisted his lips into a mocking smile.

" Idolatry, of course. ' Come, let us bow down and prostrate ourselves before our Czar and our God.' Yes sir. But nevertheless one ought to watch this. It isn't the Czar who is interesting to the people, for whom he embodies all their fears and hopes."

He was forever inviting Diomidov to go out for a stroll, but the latter steadily declined.

" You know I dislike any mass-gathering of people."

" Well, Brother, that's foolishness! " Uncle Chrysanth waxed indignant. " What do you mean, ' I dislike '? "

" D'you see, this has no place within me, this love of the people," Diomidov confessed guiltily. " Honestly speaking, what need have I of the people? I, on the other hand. . . ."

" You are losing your mind! " yelled Uncle Chrysanth. " What are you about, you loon? How can it be, ' this has no place '! What's the significance of ' this '? "

And he resolutely dragged the youth after him through the noisy streets. Clim also went along, and so did Marakuev, smiling somewhat absent-mindedly.

2

In the windows, on the balconies, the Czar's face glimmered in sightless plaster. Marakuev saw that the Czar was pug-nosed.

"He resembles Socrates in his youth," Uncle Chrysanth remarked.

Brand-new police bureaucrats stalked pompously through the streets, shouting at the painters and the janitors. Unusually large horsemen rode about in helmets and breast-plates on huge horses. Their uniformly round faces seemed made of stone. From head to foot, they reminded one of samovars, and their legs seemed superfluous, on horseback. Throngs of gamins accompanied these centaurs, tirelessly squealing out their hurrahs. Grown-ups, too, shouted deafeningly when they caught sight of the elegant cavalry guards — the Uhlans, the Hussars — who were as brightly coloured as the wooden toys of the Sergieva estate's peasant artisans.

The crowd also shouted at four Mongols who rode past in state, immovable as idols, clad in cloth-of-gold. Sitting in a landau, they looked at each other with their slanting little eyes. One of them, with inverted nostrils and half-open mouth, was smiling a white-toothed dead smile. His yellow face seemed to be made of copper.

"There, look," Uncle Chrysanth attempted to impress Diomidov as if the latter were a boy, "their ancestors gave Moscow up to fire and loot, whereas their descendants bow down before her."

"I don't see them bowing; they're perched like owls in the daytime," muttered Diomidov. He was dishevelled, his face

soiled, his hands gilt with bronze powder. It was only this morning that he had ended his work in decorating the Kremlin.

A special salvo of cheers greeted the Ambassador of France when the latter, surrounded by his brilliant retinue, rode through Moscow in the direction of the Poklonnaya Mountain.

"You see?" Uncle Chrysanth waxed instructive. "Frenchmen. They, too, demolished Moscow, burnt her; and yet, now — we harbour no evil."

They came across a group of English officers. At their head marched an unnaturally tall man with a face that looked as if it were made of three bones. He wore a white turban on his elongated head, and a multitude of orders on his narrow, flat bosom.

"I've no love for the Britishers," said Uncle Chrysanth.

Vlassorsky, the chief of police, flew by, holding on to the belt of his driver, while behind him, surrounded by a convoy, the uncle of the Czar, the Grand Duke Sergei, triumphantly passed through. Chrysanth and Diomidov bared their heads. Samghin also involuntarily raised his hand to his cap; but Marakuev, turning away to one side, reproached Chrysanth:

"Aren't you ashamed of bowing to a homosexual?"

"Hurrah-ah!" shouted the Muscovites. "Hur-rah!"

Vlassorsky's foaming horses galloped past again. The driver brought them to a full stop. The chief of police, standing up, brandished his arms and shouted orders to the workers at the windows of the houses, to the policemen and the gamins. Having cried himself hoarse, he would slump back onto the seat of the carriage, and, with a blow at the driver's back, ride away again. His long moustaches, stirring fiercely, blew back past his ears.

"Hur-rah!" the people shouted after him. Diomidov, blinking with fright, said to Clim in a low voice:

" He acts like a madman. They've all have lost their minds. It's as if they were awaiting the end of the world. And the city looks as if it were looted; everything's thrown out of the windows, hanging down. And what are they yelling about, anyway? What sort of a holiday is this? This is madness."

" A faery, enchanted madness, you eccentric," Uncle Chrysanth, who was spattered with wet paint, corrected him, and laughed happily.

" It ought to be solemn and quiet," muttered Diomidov.

Samghin silently agreed with him; some of the notes in the boastful noise of vainglorious Moscow were not entirely convincing. The people roared too many senseless hurrahs; they rushed about too much; and beneath the surface one caught many sly little jests and sneers. Marakuev, keenly noting everything amusing and foolish, called them to Clim's attention with as much joy as if he had created them himself.

" Look! " he pointed to a former advertising sign bearing the gold-lettered greeting, " May Thy Path Be an Easy One, toward the Glory and the Happiness of Russia " ended with a portion of the original sign — " and Co." — in similar lettering.

During the last few days Marakuev had tired them all with banal stories about the actions of the city's administrative powers, about the merchant body. One suspected that he himself had invented them; they all had a dismal undertone.

" Oh, yes," he would say to Lidia, " the people rejoice. But what sort of people be these? The people are over there! "

He swept his arm to the North, and stroked his curly hair abstractedly.

But even though Clim Samghin saw in the tumult a great deal that disgusted him, he was nevertheless stirred by the excitement, and expected that at any second, from somewhere out of the innumerable streets tightly jammed with people, some-

thing unusual and amazing would appear. He was ashamed to confess to himself that he wanted to see the Czar, but this desire increased within him as if against his will, fanned by the work of thousands of people and the boastful expenditure of millions. This toil and this generosity inspired the belief that an extraordinary man must appear — extraordinary not only because he was Czar, but because of Moscow's prescience of some special powers and qualities in him.

"Catherine the Great died in 1796," Uncle Chrysanth recalled. It was evident to Samghin that this Muscovite believed in the possibility of a great event, and it was clear that this was the faith of several thousands of people. He felt himself also capable of believing that tomorrow an unusual and perhaps sinister man would appear, whom Russia had been expecting for a whole century, and who, perhaps, would prove strong enough to say to the spiritually frayed, dissolute people: "What makes you carry on so?"

3

On the day of the Czar's journey from the Petrovsky Palace to the Kremlin, Moscow fell into a tense calm. Its populace was squeezed up against the walls of the houses by two lines of soldiers and two ranks of guards, composed of hand-picked, loyal inhabitants. The soldiers functioned efficiently, automatically, as though they had been wrought out of iron; the guards were for the most part comely bearded men with very broad backs. Standing shoulder to shoulder, they craned their necks in all directions, eyeing the people back of them suspiciously.

"Keep quiet, there!" they would say.

Often some restless and excited person, shoved on by elbows, would find himself squeezed into a courtyard. Once this happened to Clim. A black-bearded guard gave him a dark frown,

and a minute later stepped with his heel on Samghin's toes. Jerking his leg back, Clim pushed his knee into the small of the guard's back. The fellow turned on him, indignant:

"Well sir, what's the matter with you? And you wear eyeglasses, too!"

Without listening to any explanation, he and two other guards conducted Clim into an enclosure where three of the military police were seated. On the ground near a doorway a badly dressed man, evidently drunk, lay snoring. A few minutes later a freckled youth in a light suit was pushed in. Someone shouted:

"Hold this fellow; he's a pickpocket!"

Two of the policemen led the freckled fellow to the back of the yard, while a third said to Clim:

"The crooks are doing a land-office business today!"

Then they drove in a man who had an album in his hands. He stamped his foot, prodded the soldier's chest with his pencil, and shouted brokenly:

"You no have right to do!"

He cursed in German, French and Roumanian, but the policeman, brushing him away, snatched a new glove from the man's right hand and went away, lighting a cigarette.

An old balloon-vendor rushed in, an enormous cluster of red balloons swaying over his head. Then there entered a decently clad fellow whose cheek was tied up with a black kerchief. Confusedly, without looking at anybody, he concealed himself behind a corner of the house. Clim understood his feelings. He, too, felt flustered and foolish. He stood in the shade behind a heap of packing boxes, and listened to the policemen's listless conversation with the pickpocket.

"Podolsk is a great distance away from us," the pickpocket told them, sighing.

Sparrows hopped about the yard; pigeons, perched above the

windows, peered down in a bored fashion first with one, then the other, fish-like eye.

And so Clim stood until the solemn ringing of countless church bells pealed out. The thunderous hurrah of thousands of throats rent the air. He heard the piercing song of fanfares. The tubas of the military orchestra blared; the drums rattled.

When all this tumult subsided, there entered into the yard the police inspector's elegant assistant, accompanied by a clean-shaven fellow in dark glasses. He asked for Clim's documents, and passed them on to the man in black glasses. The latter looked through the papers, and, nodding his head in the direction of the gates, said dryly:

"You may go."

"I don't understand," Samghin began in indignation, but the fellow in eyeglasses, turning his back on him, said:

"Nobody asked you to understand."

4

Clim walked out, affronted, into the street. The mob caught him up and drew him along with it. He suddenly found himself face to face with Liutov.

Vladimir Petrovich Liutov was half drunk; he walked erect, drawing himself up like a soldier; but he swayed unsteadily, jostling passers-by, ogling women with vulgar brazenness. Seizing Clim by the arm, he held him close to his side as he urged in a loud voice:

"Come over to my place to dine. Let's drink. We *must* drink, Brother. We are a serious folk; we must drown four-fifths of our soul with drinks. To live with all one's soul in Russia is strictly forbidden by everybody. By everybody: the police, the priests, the poets and the prose writers. But when we have drunk our

four-fifths, we'll begin collecting little pornographic pictures and telling smutty stories from Russian history to one another. There's our prospect in life."

Liutov was plainly in a mood for a row, and this alarmed Clim. He tried unsuccessfully to extricate his arm, then drew Liutov into one of the by-lanes of the Tverskaya. There they got into a first-class cab. But as they sat in the carriage looking at the dense crowd of animated people in holiday dress, Liutov began talking even more loudly, addressing the driver's blue back.

"We rejoice, do we? We're meeting the Anointed One of God. He did anoint decent folk into the rank of idiots, but what does it matter! We wax joyful. There's a fig for thee! Gladden thy heart, Isaiah!"

"Drop that," Clim admonished quietly and sternly.

"What tedium, Brother! Look: the God-fearing Russian nation rushes pell-mell to treat itself to little lollipops at the expense of the Czar. 'S'touching. The little lollipops will be sucked by the descendants of the gadabout Russian populace, the same populace which gadded after Bolotnikov, after Otrepiev, after the Thief of Tushina, after Kozma Minin—and then gadded after Mikhaila Romanov. Then it gadded after Stepan Razin, after Pugachev, and was even ready to follow Buonaparte. A gadabout people! It's only the Dekabrists—and the men of the First of March—that they refrained from gadding after." [48]

Clim stared at the stony back of the driver, conjecturing: Could the cabby overhear this drunken speech? But this first-class cabby, steadfastly swaying on his seat, was shouting warnings, upbraiding the pedestrians who crossed his path:

"Look out there—Hey! Look out where you're goin', now, Brother."

5

There were guests awaiting Liutov at home: the woman who had visited him in the country, and a handsome, conservatively dressed blond man with an eyeglass and a small beard.

"Kraft is my name," said he, squeezing Samghin's hand warmly. The woman, smiling her reluctant smile, gave her first and second names, which were those of thousands of Russian women:

"Mariya Ivanova."

"I believe we've met," Clim reminded her, but she did not reply.

Liutov seemed to have sobered up suddenly. He assumed a frown, and none too politely offered his guests dinner.

Having surmised who these people were, Clim surreptitiously studied the blond man. He was an exceedingly well-mannered and affable fellow. The smile scarcely ever vanished from his pale, rather cold face, whether it was turned toward Liutov, the chambermaid, or the ash tray. His very red lips beneath his light moustache opened and closed with such studied precision that it seemed as if every little hair at the tips of his moustache stirred with perfect rhythm. There was a panpsychic quality in the benign smile with which he rewarded even his bread and the knife in his hand. However, Samghin suspected that a contempt for everything and everybody was concealed behind it. This man ate little, drank carefully, and uttered the most commonplace of words, which left absolutely no residue in the memory. He remarked that there were a great many people out in the streets, that the numerous flags were an ornament to the city, and that the *mouzhiks* and the peasant women of the surrounding villages were going in droves to the Khodynskoë Field. He evidently embarrassed his host very

much. Liutov answered his smiling comments briefly and dryly. The woman's conversation during the entire meal consisted of the words "Thank you," uttered twice; and "Thanks!" once.

And if these words had not been accompanied by her peculiar smile, one might not even have remarked that she, like all mortals, had a face.

As soon as they had finished dining, Liutov jumped up from his chair and asked:

"Well, what do you say?"

"If you please," said the blond man politely.

They went off Indian file, the host in front, after him the blond man, then the woman, gliding noiselessly as though upon ice.

"I'll be through soon," Liutov promised Clim, and left him to wonder how Liutov had managed to sober up on such short notice? Could it be that he had been only pretending to be fuddled? And why, from what motives, did he consort with revolutionists?

Liutov returned about twenty minutes later. He dug his hands into his pockets and dashed about the room, his pale face twitching.

"*Narodniki?*" asked Clim.

"Something of that sort."

"Well, now, are you helping them?"

"Must. The fathers contributed to churches; the children are contributing to revolution. A break-neck leap, but what's one to do, Brother? The life of the upper crust of that uneatable loaf which is called Russia may be entitled thus: 'A History of the Break-Neck Leaps of the Russian Intelligentsia.' For it is only the *messieurs* the patent historians who are obliged, being specialists, to prove that there exist such things as survivance,

consistency and other night-hags. But what sort of survivance have we? Leap, if you don't want to stifle!"

He halted in the middle of the room and burst into loud laughter, jerking his hands out of his pockets, clutching at his head.

"We certainly have vitiated the atmosphere! The deacon's right—the devil take it all. However, let's have a drink. I'll treat you to such Bordeaux as will make you quiver! Duniyasha!"

He sat down at the table, rubbing his hands, biting his lips. He told the chambermaid what wine to bring and, rubbing the dark growth on his cheeks, began a nervous jabbering:

"I love the deacon; he's a bright fellow. And a courageous. One feels sorry for him. Three days ago he carried his son off to a hospital, and he knows that out of the hospital he'll drive with him only to the cemetery. And yet he loves him, does the deacon. I saw the son—a rather ardent chap. Most probably St. Juste was just such another."[49]

Clim listened to him in amazement, not believing his ears, feeling a wave of friendliness for Liutov.

"Can it be because I've been insulted?" he asked himself, recalling the courtyard and the secret service agent's curt offhand phrase of permission:

"You may go."

6

Makarov arrived, tired and gloomy. He sat down at the table and drained a glass of wine at a single gulp.

"I've been dissecting a girl, a chambermaid," he began telling them, contemplating the table. "She'd been decorating a house and tumbled out of the window. Remarkable fractures of the pelvic bones—to smithereens."

"There's no need of talking about dead people," said Liutov. He stared for a moment out of the window.

"Last night in a dream I saw Odysseus, as he is depicted in the vignette to the first edition of the *Iliad,* in Gnedich's translation. Odysseus had plowed the sand and was sowing it with salt. Samghin, my father was a soldier; he fought at Sebastopol, and is in love with the Frenchmen. He is always praising the *Iliad*. 'That's how nobly they fought in the old times!' Yes."

Halting in the middle of the room he swung up his hand, about to say something else, but at that instant the deacon appeared, amusingly garbed in an old sleeveless jacket which was too short for him. Its shortcomings seemed to embarrass him. When Makarov began to banter him he smiled glumly and boomed:

"I was compelled to take off the uniform coat of the church militant. One must be getting used to other ways. Treat us to tea, host."

They drank cognac. Then the deacon and Makarov sat down to play draughts. Liutov began to wander about the room again, jerking his shoulders, unable to settle down anywhere. At intervals he went to the windows, peered cautiously into the street, and muttered:

"They're going. Everybody's going."

He seated himself finally at the table, where he turned down the light and closed his eyes. Samghin, feeling that Liutov's mood was infecting him, wanted to leave, but Liutov insisted that he stay, and urged him to spend the night.

"In the morning we'll all go to the Khodynka. After all, it's interesting. Although one might look on from the roof. Kostiya, where's that spyglass of ours?"

Clim stayed. They began drinking red wine, and presently Liutov and the deacon vanished unperceived. Makarov started

practising on the guitar, and Clim, feeling tipsy, went upstairs and lay down to sleep. In the morning Makarov, armed with a brass telescope, awoke him.

"Something has happened on the Khodynka; the people are running away from there. I'm going up on the roof. Want to come along?"

Samghin was still sleepy. He arose reluctantly and climbed up on the roof. From there, even with the naked eye, they could see a cloud of greyish-yellow fog over the field. Makarov looked through the glass, and passing it over to Clim said, rubbing his eyes sleepily:

"Roe."

Yes, the field, covered over with the puzzling cloud, seemed smeared with a thick layer of caviar; in the dark mass, among the small, roundish grains, here and there gleamed white and red spots, like small fibres.

"The red blouses remind me of wounds," Makarov muttered, yawning. "It's probably all a lie—no occurrence of any sort," he continued, after a silence. "It's boring to look at concentrated stupidity."

Smoothing his ruffled hair, he sat down near a chimney, saying:

"Well, Vladimir did not pass the night at home; he showed up only just now. Sober, however."

7

The enormous, crazy-quilt town was humming, roaring. Hundreds of church bells pealed ceaselessly. Wheels of carriages rumbled rapidly over the cobbled roadways. All the sounds blended into one—organistic, mighty. A black network of birds fluttered noisily above the city, but not one of them flew in the

direction of the Khodynka. There, afar off on an enormous field, under the dirty cap of the fog, the closely compressed, roe-mass of people stood rooted. It seemed a single body; only by straining one's eyes could the barely perceptible waverings of the tiny grains be distinguished. Occasionally a wave of movement seemed to swell the multitudes, only to sink again within their viscid density. From thence, too, a noise came floating to the roof—not the rejoicing clamour of the city, but a sound that was wintry, like the howling of a blizzard. For a moment it was clearly audible, then became submerged in the pealing of the bells, in the rumble and the roar of the streets.

Glueing his eyes to the brass circle of the telescope, Samghin looked on, bewitched. The countless throng reminded him of the Crusades, tales of which had frightened him in his childhood; of the masses, attended by many thousands, in honour of the miracle-working icon of the Oranskaya Mother of God. Through the torrent of noise there rang in his memory an exclamation of Uncle Chrysanth's:

"'Come all ye, let us bow down, let us fall upon our faces.'"

He could make out that, under the weight of the throng, the earth was quaking, undulating; the little globes of the heads were jumping up like coffee beans on a hot pan. There was a weird quality in these convulsive movements, and the distant sounds were coming to resemble the funebral yet sinister chanting of a countless choir.

A picture came to his mind: Were this mass to surge suddenly like a wave into the city, its streets would not be able to hold the pressure of the dark torrents of people. The people would overturn the houses, trample their roofs into dust, sweep the entire city away, as a broom sweeps away rubbish.

Clim fell to contemplating the piling-up, unencompassable by the eye, of the diversified buildings of Moscow. The air over

the city was clear; the golden crosses of the churches, reflecting the sun, pierced it with sharp beams, scattering them about the brown and green squares of the roofs. The city reminded one of a soiled old calico crazy-quilt torn in places. In its elongated holes tiny figures of people swarmed, their movements becoming ever more uneasy, ever more meaningless. They met, halted, gathered in small groups; then all of them started off in one direction, or else rapidly ran apart from one another, as though frightened. In one of the cracks of the city a blue cordon of cavalry appeared. Men and horses bounced up and down like rubber toys on the roadway. Thin little poles like fishing rods swayed above their heads, and the sharp points of their pikes that looked like fishes flashed through the air.

"In reality, the city is defenceless," said Clim; but Makarov was no longer on the roof. Unperceived, he had gone. Black horses harnessed to green carts thundered over the grey cobbles of the pavement. The brass-clad heads of the firemen flashed. It all seemed unreal to Clim, like a vision seen in a dream. He descended from the roof and entered the cool quiet of the house. Makarov was sitting near the table, reading a newspaper and sipping strong tea.

"Well, what's going on?" he asked, without looking up.

"I don't know, but it seems . . ."

"Probably a fight," said Makarov. He flipped the newspaper. "What vulgar banalities they write!"

For five minutes they drank their tea in silence. Clim listened to the shuffling and tramping in the street, to the gay and noisy voices. Suddenly the hubbub of voices subsided, as if a strong wind had sprung up and blown the streets clear of people, leaving only the heavy rumbling of a cart, and the tinkling of bells. Makarov rose and went to the window.

"Well, there's the solution. Look!" he cried.

A dapple-grey Percheron, large maned, with shaggy fetlocks, was clumping along the flag-draped street, commiseratingly nodding his grey head with every step. Beside the horse, with head bowed low, strode the broad-shouldered, bearded driver, a portion of the reins flung over his shoulder. His bald head was bared; his eyes were fixed on the ground. As he passed along the people halted and uncovered their heads. An arm protruded from the new tarpaulin covering of the cart. It stretched out like the imploring arm of a beggar, bare to the shoulder, daubed in blue and red colours. On one of the fingers a gold ring glistened. Beside the arm a reddish, dishevelled braid swung to and fro, and from the cart-tail swung a leg in a dusty boot.

"About six people," muttered Makarov. "A fight, evidently."

He said something else, but, though it was quiet in the room and on the street, Clim, staring after the cart, did not grasp his words. The vehicle's slow movement compelled the people meeting it to stand long on the sidewalk, baring their heads. Grey shadows of fright appeared on their faces, making them seem uniform.

Another small rickety cart passed by, loaded with crumpled forms, uncovered. The clothing they wore was torn into shreds; the exposed parts of their bodies were dusty and muddy. After the carts came an ever greater, denser throng of beggar-like people, in tatters, with dishevelled hair and swollen faces. They walked on quietly, answering briefly and unwillingly the questions of those they met. Many of them were limping. One fellow, with the livid face of a strangled man, was walking along with his right hand resting on his shoulder, much as a cabby holds his reins; with the left hand he supported his right arm by the elbow. He seemed to be saying something, for the remnants of his beard trembled. The oncoming throngs of the injured crowded to the shady side of the street, as though they were

ashamed, or afraid, of the sun. They seemed saturated with muddy water; Clim expected that with their very next step some of them would slump down and flow over the street in slush. But slump they did not; they all walked on. And as they walked on, Clim saw that the people they passed were turning and following along after them.

"There are too many of them for the thing to have been a fight," said Makarov in a voice that was not his usual one. "I'm going out to make inquiries."

8

Samghin went with him. As they came out into the street, a large man with a protuberant belly, in a rusty waistcoat and trousers torn up to the knees, was walking unsteadily past the gates. In his hands he carried a crumpled hat which he was smoothing out with trembling fingers. Makarov clutched the man's elbow:

"What happened?"

The man opened his hirsute mouth and looked with red eyes at Makarov and Clim; then, with a gesture of hopelessness, he passed on. But after a few steps he turned, glared at them, and shouted:

"Everybody's guilty! Everybody!"

"The answer of a criminal," grumbled Makarov, and spat through his teeth like a workman.

Excited and communicative people began streaming past them, but one could make neither head nor tail of what they were saying. They shouted, they howled, but it was difficult to understand them. Some of them were even laughing furtively.

A green fire-department wagon was passing, its lumpy load covered with canvas. The small bells on the horses' collars tinkled

gaily; the driver's brass-covered head was agleam. A very strange impression was aroused in Samghin by the gay little bell and by the fireman's head, which had about it a festal glow. After this cart came another, then a third and a fourth, each surmounted by a solemn brass-helmeted head.

"Trojans," Makarov muttered.

Clim, stricken, followed the last cart with his eyes. An extra man had been loaded on top of the corpses which were placed lengthwise along the cart; he had been flung up at a careless slant and lay almost across them, thrusting out from under the tarpaulin his bared arms of unequal lengths. The short one stuck out woodenly; even the fingers stood out stiffly like the points of a star. The other one dangled at full length, evidently broken at the elbow. It swung with the cart's movement; its hand, on which two fingers were lacking, reminded Clim of a lobster's claw.

"'The stone is a fool. The tree is a fool,'" he recollected.

"I can't stand this any longer," he said suddenly, and ran into the courtyard. Within the gates he halted, took off his glasses, blinked the veil of dust from his eyes, and reflected: "Whatever made me—why did I ever go? I shouldn't have."

Makarov, on the other side of the gates, called to him:

"Hold on—where are you going?"

Then he came up with Marakuev and thrust the latter before him into the courtyard. Marakuev was hatless, spent and dishevelled. A bloody scratch ran from ear to nose on his dark face. He held himself unnaturally erect as he fixed his glazed bloodshot eyes on Makarov and questioned through closed teeth:

"You—Where were you? Did you see?"

In his unmoving eyes and wooden figure there was something fearful, insane. From his shoulders hung a broad, grey, wrinkled jacket with its pockets torn off, evidently from somebody else's

back. His bright calico blouse was ripped across his chest; his cheap trousers of lustrine were stained with green paint. More fearful to Clim than anything else was Marakuev's immobility. He stood as tensely drawn up as though he were afraid that if he took his hands out of his pockets or bent his head or bowed his back, his body would break off and fall into pieces. He stood there and asked in the same unvarying words:

"Where were you?"

Makarov almost carried him into the house.

Pushing him into a dressing-room, he quickly stripped him to the waist and began scrubbing him. But it was difficult to get Marakuev's neck under the faucet of the wash basin. This usually jolly student, thrusting Makarov away with his shoulder, stubbornly refused to bend over. Finally he straightened up altogether and bellowed:

"Wait a while. I'll do it myself. You don't have to do that!"

It seemed as if he were afraid of water, like a man bitten by a rabid dog.

"Find the chambermaid; ask her for some linen," commanded Makarov.

Clim obeyed. He was glad not to look at the injured man. As he went from room to room looking for the chambermaid, he saw Liutov standing bare-footed in his night clothes at a window, holding his head in his hands. At the sound of steps he turned, and blinking incomprehendingly, he asked, indicating the street with an absurd gesture of both arms:

"What—is this?"

"Some sort of misfortune has occurred," Clim answered. The word "misfortune" he had uttered slowly, waveringly, conscious that he should have used some other word, but his mind was confused, and the words would not come to his tongue.

When he and Liutov entered the dining-room, Marakuev was

stretched out naked on the divan, and Makarov, his sleeves rolled up, was grunting as he massaged Marakuev's chest, abdomen and ribs. Rolling his moist head from side to side on the leather cushions, Marakuev rambled disconnectedly in a thick voice, as in a delirium:

"They have trampled one another. What a frightful thing. Did you see? The devil! People crawl away from the field and leave corpses behind them. Have you noticed? The firemen ride with their bells; they ride along and jingle! I said: 'You ought to muffle them. It isn't right!' One of 'em answered: 'Can't be done.' Idiots with jingle-bells! In general, I must say . . ."

His voice died away and his eyes closed for a moment. Then he began anew:

"The impression is that they are still crushing you; they'll trample a man down and go off without turning around to look at him. That's it — they go off. It's amazing! They go along as if over cobbles — over me."

Marakuev raised his head, propped his arms against the divan, and drew himself up carefully. He smiled with an unbelievable grimace which curved his mouth into a sickle and stretched the scratched skin of his face until his ears seemed to move back toward the nape of his neck.

"Treading upon me — Do you understand? No, this must be experienced. A fellow lying down and people putting their feet on him as on a tussock in a swamp! They crush you. How's that? A living body. It's unimaginable."

"Dress yourself," said Makarov, handing him linen.

Thrusting his head into the shirt and looking out of it as through a snowdrift, Marakuev continued:

"Corpses — in hundreds. Some of them are lying as though crucified against the ground. One woman had her head trampled down within a little pit."

"Why did you go?" Clim asked sternly, suddenly surmising why Marakuev had been on the Khodynsskoë Field disguised in the clothes of an artisan.

"I went to chat a bit—to find things out," answered the student, coughing, becoming more and more himself again. "I swallowed my fill of dust!"

He got to his feet, looked intently at the floor, and once more distorted his mouth in a wide mirthless smile. Makarov led him to a table and seated him. Liutov poured out half a tumbler of wine and handed it to him:

"Drink it down," he advised.

This was his first word. He had been sitting in silence, his elbows on the table, his head in his hands, gazing blinkingly at Marakuev as if at a bright light.

Marakuev took the glass, looked into it, and placed it on the table abstractedly, saying:

"This woman was lying alongside a log; her head stuck out beyond the end of it, and people put their feet on her head. They tramped it down into the ground. Let me have some tea."

He went on, speaking with less and less effort:

"I arrived there about midnight and was sucked in. Very deeply. Some were already standing in a swoon, as if they were dead. Such density—a quicksand, you know. And the air was leaden; there was nothing to breathe. Toward morning some of them lost their minds, I think. They were shouting. Very uncanny. One fellow was standing beside me and all the time tried to bite me. They struck at one another, backs of heads against foreheads, foreheads against backs of necks. And with knees. They trod on toes. Of course, this didn't help. No! I know. I myself struck out," said he, blinking wonderingly, pointing a finger at his chest. "Where was one to go? Plastered all over with people on all sides. I struck out."

9

The deacon arrived. He had just washed; his beard was still wet. He opened his mouth to speak, but Liutov, indicating Marakuev with a wink, stopped him. Marakuev bent over the table in silence, stirring his tea. Clim Samghin reflected aloud:

"How dreadful the Czar must feel!"

"You have picked a strange person to feel sorry for," Liutov caught him up ironically. The other three paid no attention to Clim's words. Makarov, frowning, drew the deacon aside and talked to him in a low voice about the catastrophe.

"Nevertheless I do feel sorry for him; I feel sorry for all humanity," continued Clim, turning to Liutov. "How would you feel if some misfortune were to happen at your wedding?"

This was still more tactless. Clim, feeling his ears burning, mentally cursed himself and fell silent, dreading what Liutov might say. But it was Marakuev who spoke:

"Of the indignant there are only a few!" he said, tossing his head. "I did not see anybody who was indignant. No. But a certain strange fellow in a white hat was collecting volunteers to dig graves. He invited me too. A very businesslike chap. He invited me as though he had been anticipating for a long time an occasion to dig a grave. And a large one, at that, for many people."

He drank tea, ate a little and sipped some cognac. His chestnut hair had dried around his face; his eyes had grown clearer.

"Some revealed monstrous strength," he recalled, looking into his empty glass with concentration. "Why, it's impossible to tear off a man's scalp with one's arm and fingers, isn't it, Makarov? I mean, not the hair, but the skin?"

"Quite impossible," Makarov glumly and emphatically agreed.

"And yet I saw a man do just that: he sank his nails into the

nape of the neck of a fat chap beside me and tore a chunk out. The bone was exposed. He was the first to strike me, too."

"You ought to go to sleep," said Makarov. "Come on, now!"

"They revealed amazing strength," the student repeated, as he meekly followed Makarov.

"Well, how did all this take place?" asked the deacon.

No one answered him. Clim was wondering what action the Czar would take. He felt that for the first time he was thinking of the Czar as a real person.

"What are we going to do?" asked the deacon again, emphasizing the pronoun.

"We'll be digging graves," grumbled Liutov.

The deacon looked at him, then at Clim, clutched his triple beard, and said:

"'God is jealous, and the Lord avengeth; the Lord avengeth, and is furious, the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.'" [50]

Clim glanced at him in amazement. Could it be possible that the deacon could, and wanted to, exonerate everyone from blame?

But the latter, shaking his head, continued:

"Cruel, satanic words did the prophet Nahum utter. There, you youngsters, wherever you look, punishments and vengeance are excellently worked out for us. But what of rewards? Of rewards we know naught. The Dantes, the Miltons and others, right down to our people themselves, have limned hell unto the smallest detail, and most awesomely. But what of paradise? Of paradise naught is told us; we know but one thing: there angels sing hosanna unto Sabaoth."

He struck the table suddenly with his fist, rattling the dishes. His eyes glowered; he began to shout in a drunken voice:

"But wherefore the hosanna? Wherefore, now, the hosanna, I

ask? There, youngsters, is a question for you: Wherefore the hosanna? And for whom, for whom, then, is the anathema, if voices be uplifted in a hosanna to the architect of hell—eh?"

"Stop," requested Liutov, lifting his hand in a gesture of hopelessness.

"No, you wait. We have two systems of criticism: one because of our yearning after truth, the other because of vainglorioussness. Christ was born from the yearning after truth; but what of Sabaoth? And now, what if, in the Garden of Gethsemane, it was not Sabaoth who showed the cup of suffering to Christ, but Satan, in order to mock him? And, perhaps, this was even no cup, but the sign of the fig? Young men, it's up to you to resolve this!"

Makarov rushed in and called to Clim:

"He says that he saw Uncle Chrysanth there, and this Diomidov—D'you understand?"

Makarov struck his fist hard against his palm; his face was pale.

"We must find out—we must go. . . ."

"To Lidia!" finished Clim.

"Let's go together. Vladimir, send somebody after the doctor. Marakuev has a bloody vomit."

As they went out Makarov said irrelevantly:

"They call him Peter."

10

The street was crowded and noisy; but when they came out on the Tverskaya it was even worse. A throng of tattered, rumpled, dirty people mulled about endlessly. The hum of their speech, not loud but ceaseless, filled the air, rent occasionally by the hysterical voices of women. The people turned their eyes wearily

away from the sun, bowing their heads as though from a sense of guilt. But frequently, when some head was lifted, Samghin saw on the tired face a look of quiet joy.

Samghin was fatigued with impressions. The sorrowful, frightened faces in the crowd, the ones lit up by curiosity and those that were blissfully stolid, no longer agitated him as they flitted by him in the flag-hung street. The variety and vividness of his impressions gave Clim a strong sense of his own reality. He did not consider the cause of the catastrophe; that, indeed, could be inferred from Marakuev's story: people had dashed after the "lollipops" and had crushed one another. This gave Clim cause to look down on them with contemptuous indifference from the height of the carriage he was in.

Makarov, his back turned to Clim, was sitting with one foot on the step of the fly, as though preparing to jump down to the pavement. He was grumbling:

"What the devil! How these crazy flags dazzle one's eyes!"

"Probably the Czar will compensate generously the families of those who were killed," Clim conjectured. Makarov urged the cabby to drive faster. At the wedding of Marie Antoinette an unfortunate accident had occurred, he reminded Clim.

"It's like him to think of that," Clim reflected. "Here, as always with him, woman is in the very foreground; it's as if Louis never even existed."

Uncle Chrysanth's apartment was locked up. On the door leading to the kitchen there also hung a padlock. Makarov tried it, took off his cap, and mopped his perspiring forehead. To him, the closed apartment seemed to be an evil omen. When they came out of the dark hall into the street Clim saw that Makarov's face was pale and drawn.

"We must find out where they carry those who are wounded. We must make the rounds of the hospitals. Come on."

"Do you think. . . ."

But Makarov did not give Clim a chance to finish the sentence.

"Come on!" he said roughly.

By evening they had made the rounds of half-a-score hospitals by carriage and foot. They had returned twice to the little iron fist guarding Uncle Chrysanth's kitchen door. It was already dark when Clim suggested in a low voice that they make a trip to the cemetery.

"Bosh!" said Makarov harshly. "You keep quiet." A moment later he added indignantly:

"That can't be."

His cheek-bones stood out on his haggard face; he moved his jaw as though he were gnashing his teeth, and kept twisting his head in all directions, peering into the faces of the crowd. The people in the streets were becoming more and more quiet; their clamor had subsided into a low grumble; the evening was subduing them. Makarov's mood would be sure to alarm Lidia, Clim reflected. He himself was becoming more and more depressed. He was tired physically; his eyes were dulled from looking at hundreds of bruised, lacerated beings; felt himself poisoned, deadened.

They were nearing the house afoot, when a cab drove out of an alley. Varvara, dishevelled, sat leaning forward in it, her small hat and her umbrella clutched between her knees.

"They've crushed stepfather to death," she cried, thumping the cabby's back. There was a note of pride in her voice, Samghin thought.

"Where's Lidia?" Makarov asked immediately.

Jumping to the sidewalk, the girl thrust some money into the cabby's hands and went toward the house. Today she was not gracefully swinging her umbrella in one hand and her

hat in the other. With hysterical loudness she was telling them:

"He's unrecognizable. I knew him by his boots and his finger-ring. You remember? The one of sardonyx? It was horrible. He has no face."

Her own face was tear-stained; her chin quivered; but it seemed to Clim that in her greenish eyes lurked an evil glitter.

"Where is Lidia?" Makarov repeated insistently, once more forestalling Clim.

"She's looking for Diomidov. Some actor saw him near the Alexandrovsky depot, and says that he's lost his mind, this Diomidov."

Varvara's loud voice was drawing a crowd about them. A man in a straw hat, carrying a little cane, pushed Samghin aside and asked, looking into the girl's face:

"Are there really ten thousand injured? And many insane?"

He took off his hat and exclaimed, almost rapturously:

"What an extraordinary calamity!"

Clim turned around to see why Makarov did not drive away this idiot. But Makarov had vanished.

In her room Varvara, with abrupt gestures, scattered over the table and bed her hat, purse and umbrella, and the sodden lump of her handkerchief. She spoke in quick jerks:

"His cheek is torn to pieces—his tongue is hanging out of a wound. I saw no less than three hundred corpses. More! What is this, Samghin? They could not have done it to themselves!"

She drifted distractedly about the room as though borne by a fitful wind. She seemed constantly to be seeking for something. She wiped her face with a wet towel, picked up combs and brushes from her dressing table and immediately threw them down again. She licked her lips and bit them nervously.

"I want a drink Samghin. I want a drink dreadfully!"

The pupils of her eyes were dull and distended; her swollen eyelids, blinking in fatigue, were becoming redder and redder. She burst into tears, and cried out, twisting her tear-soaked handkerchief:

"He was nearer to me than a mother — such a funny, dear fellow. And his love for the people was endearing. At the cemetery they said that the students had dug pits, in order to arouse the people against the Czar. Oh, my God!"

Samghin grew flustered. He was not yet adept at comforting weeping women, and besides, he found Varvara's grief far too picturesque to be real. But she calmed down of her own accord when the stalwart Anphimievna arrived and began telling them her story in a gentle but matter-of-fact voice:

"He was carried over to a little chapel, but they don't want to give him up to be sent home; they begged very earnestly that Chrysanth Vassilivich should not be taken home. 'Judge for yourself,' says they, 'how could you possibly have a funeral now, when there's such celebrations going on.'"

Falling into a dejected mood, the cook said:

"And it's true, Variya. What's the use of provokin' the Czar? God be with them all; it's their sin — and it's their reckoning."

Varvara nodded her head in silence. Asking for tea, she went to her own room and a few minutes later appeared in a black dress, with her hair done up. Her face, though sad, was nevertheless calmer.

At tea, Clim, glancing at his watch, asked uneasily:

"But what do you think — will Lidia find this Diomidov fellow?"

"How should I know?" she answered dryly and, in the prophetic tone of a person of great worldly experience, began:

"I do not approve of her attitude toward him. She doesn't

distinguish love from pity, and there's a horrible mistake awaiting her. Diomidov amazes one; one feels sorry for him; but—is it possible to love such a fellow? Women love those who are strong and brave—such men they love sincerely and for long. They love, of course, people who have peculiarities, as well. Some learned German has said: 'In order to be noticed one must become eccentric.'"

As though having forgotten about the death of her stepfather, she talked for five minutes about Lidia, critically and captiously, and Clim surmised that she did not love her friend. He was amazed how well, up to this moment, she had concealed her antipathy toward Lidia, and his amazement raised the green-eyed girl somewhat in his eyes. Then she recalled that it was the proper thing to talk about her stepfather, and she said that men of his type were men who had outlived their age, but that, notwithstanding, there was a beauty about them, of a sort.

Clim felt himself more and more alarmed and uneasy. He realized that it would have been more decent and tactful, in general, in regard to Lidia, if he were going about the streets, seeking her, instead of sitting here and drinking tea. But now it was awkward even to go away.

II

It was already dark when Lidia came running in, while Makarov led Diomidov in, supporting him under his arm. It seemed to Samghin that everything in the room shuddered, and that the ceiling sank downward. Diomidov limped; his left hand was wrapped up in Makarov's cap and hung from the neck in a ragged sling. In a voice which was not his own, he began, gasping:

"Why, I knew, I didn't want to. . . ."

His light hair had matted on his head into tufts like sheep-wool; one eye was closed in a dark swelling, and the other, wide open and moist, was frightfully goggling. He was in tatters; one leg of his trousers was torn across — a bare knee trembled in this hole, and this trembling of the rounded bone, covered with dirty skin, was repulsive.

Makarov painstakingly made him sit down on a chair near the door — Diomidov's usual place in the room; the property man made his shaking foot firm on the floor, and, brushing the dust off his head with one hand, began roaring hoarsely:

"I said — they all ought to be stuck through with bayonets, smashed to smithereens, so's they wouldn't crush one another. Oh, Lord!"

"Well, now, what are we going to do?" Makarov asked Lidia abruptly. "Get hot water — and we need linen. He should have been carried off to a hospital, and not here . . ."

"Keep still! Or get out of here," Lidia cried, running into the kitchen. Her angry cry made Varvara start howling like a country-wife, like one possessed:

"We must judge, curse, punish . . ."

Looking at Diomidov, she clutched her head, rocked from side to side as she sat in her chair, and stamped her feet. Diomidov, too, was looking at her with his goggling eye, and was shouting:

"His own space for each! And don't dare move from it! No need of any baits! No need of candies! No need of souvenir mugs!"

His leg began jumping again, stamping out a rapid tattoo on the floor — the knee kept on jumping from the hole in his trousers; he diffused the oppressive odour of excrement; Makarov held him down by his shoulder, and loudly, glumly, said to Varvara:

"Let's have some linen, some towels . . . What's the use of shouting! They'll be punished, never fear."

"Everyone by himself," Diomidov shouted. Tears ran from his eyes in two little streams.

Lidia ran in. Thrusting Makarov aside, and easily helping Diomidov up on his feet, she led him into the kitchen.

"Can it be possible that she herself is going to wash him?" asked Clim, squeamishly puckering his face and shuddering.

Varvara, with a toss of her head, scattered her abundant reddish hair over her shoulders, and quickly went off into her stepfather's room; Samghin, having followed her with his glance, reflected that her hair should have been loosened earlier, and not at this moment. Makarov had opened the windows and was muttering to himself:

"I found them on the big road. This chap was standing and yelling, preaching: 'All of them ought to be driven away, scattered," and Lidia was trying to persuade him to come along with her . . . 'I hate all your people' he was yelling . . ."

There was a crackling and howling in the city, as though in a most enormous oven, damp fire-wood was furiously bursting into a blaze.

"Are there going to be bonfires in the streets tonight?" asked Clim.

"Of course not, it's been put off—how can you think otherwise?" Makarov angrily remarked.

"But why?" replied Clim. "This is a celebration. It would be foolish if they were to put it off."

Makarov did not say anything; having perched on the window sill, he was plucking his moustache.

"Has Diomidov lost his mind?" asked Samghin, hoping for an affirmative answer; Makarov did not reply at once, and then his answer was not consoling:

"Scarcely. He's one of those types who, all their life long, dwell on the borderline of insanity."

Lidia appeared in the doorway. She swayed before them, as if she had stumbled against a threshold; with one hand she seized the jamb, with the other she covered her eyes.

"I can not," she said, staggering, as though choosing a spot where she might fall. The sleeves of her blouse were rolled up to her elbows; drops of water plopped against the floor from her wet skirt.

"I can not," she repeated, in a very strange voice, guiltily, and with evident amazement.

"Go — wash him," she begged, covering her face with her hands.

"Come on — you'll help me," Makarov said to Clim.

The naked Diomidov was sitting in the kitchen on the floor before a large basin, pressing his left hand against his breast. Water was running down from his wet hair, and it seemed that he was dissolving, decomposing. His extremely white skin was soiled with excrement, covered with black and blue spots and cuts. With an uncertain movement of his right arm he dipped up a handful of water, splashed it in his face and his swollen eye. The water ran down his breast, without washing the dark blotches off it.

"Everyone should have his space," he was muttering. "Apart from one another. I'm no toy . . ."

"He is like Isaac," thought Clim Samghin, but immediately corrected himself: "A meat-offering for idols."

Anphimievna, the cook, was standing by the stove, watching how the water, running out of the faucet, spluttered and splashed into a kettle.

"The little lad has completely lost his head," she said disapprovingly, eyeing Diomidov askance. "He's one of the simple

folk, and yet how soft. Full of caprices. He goes and dashes a pitcher of water on Lidochka . . ."

Samghin heard a queer sound, as if Makarov had gritted his teeth. Having taken off his cap, he cautiously and dexterously, as a woman does with a baby, started washing Diomidov, kneeling before him.

And suddenly Samghin felt that he was seared by indignation; here, Lidia would be embracing this spoiled body — perhaps she had already embraced it? This thought forced him to leave the kitchen. He quickly made his way into Varvara's room, prepared to say something overwhelming to Lidia.

Lidia was sitting on the bed. Embracing Varvara with one arm, she was making her smell something in a cut-glass phial; the light of the lamp coloured it with iridescent tints.

"Well?" she asked.

"He's washing him," Clim answered dryly.

"Does he feel pain?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Variya," said Lidia, "I don't know how to console anybody, and in general, is there any need for consolation? I don't know . . ."

"Go away, Samghin," Varvara called out, falling sideways on the bed.

Clim went away, without having said a word to Lidia.

"She has such a tortured face. Perhaps now . . . she will be cured."

XVIII

1

FLAMING lights blazed, smoking greasily, from shallow platters of tallow set on stubby iron posts. Samghin decided that the illumination in the streets was feeble and that there was something hesitant even about the fire. Even the noise of the city was far from jubilant—it was sullen and grumbling. Small groups of people had gathered along Tversky Boulevard. In one of the groups a dispute was going on. Would there be fireworks or not? Someone was warmly asserting that there would be.

A tall fellow in a grey hat was saying confidently:

"The sovereign Emperor won't stand for any nonsense."

A third voice striving to reconcile the different opinions, said:

"The fireworks have been put off till tomorrow."

"The sovereign Emperor . . ."

From somewhere behind the trees came a ringing shout:

"He's now dancing in the city hall—this Sovereign, this Emperor!"

Everybody looked in that direction. Very resolutely, two of them went off toward the voice, which made Clim decide to move away. He thought:

"If the Czar has gone off to the ball, it means that he has nerve—that he is a man of daring. Diomidov is right . . ."

He was walking toward the Strastnoya Square through a buzz of talk, catching fragmentary phrases. There—somebody shouted:

"Eh, thinks I, I'm not going to perish!"

"Probably this fellow may have planted his foot on some man's body. It may even have been on Marakuev," Clim thought. But, in general, he was incapable of thought. He was overburdened with impressions. Their weight crushed thought. He was hungry and thirsty.

Near the monument to Pushkin someone was speaking to a small knot of people:

". . . No, just you reflect about the entire order of our life — how are we governed, for instance? . . ."

Samghin glanced at the orator and, by his curly beard, by the smile on the shaggy face, recognized his garrulous neighbor on the sleeping boards in the basement of Iakov Platonov.

"'To be a stone is to be a fool . . .'"

On the square he was caught up with by Poyarkov, who was walking along like a crane; Samghin called after him unwillingly:

"Where are you going?"

Poyarkov fell into step with him, talking in a listless, low voice:

"I've been walking about since morning — observing, listening. I've been trying to explain things. But these people understand nothing. And yet, the matter's simple — just move all in one mass straight from the field to the Kremlin, and there you are! It would seem that in Bruells the public, after listening to the *Prophet,* moved on right from the theatre — and received the Constitution . . . It was granted them."

Halting before the doors of a small restaurant, he suggested:

"Let's go into this 'haven of grieving hearts.' Marakuev and I frequent this place . . ."

When Clim had told him about Marakuev, Poyarkov sighed:

"It might have been worse. They say that five thousand people have perished. A battalion."

Poyarkov spoke in a muffled voice; his face seemed to be unnaturally long. For the first time Clim noticed that he had a reddish moustache. "It's a pity he shaves his chin," reflected Clim.

"Just the other day," Poyarkov was saying, "a merchant, at whose house I tutor, said: 'I feel like eatin' pancakes, and yet none of my acquaintances will pop off.' I asked him: 'Why is it necessary for you to have them die?'—'Why, a pancake,' says he, 'tastes especially good at funerals.' Probably now he'll get his fill of pancakes . . ."

2

Clim ate cold meat, washing it down with beer as he listened inattentively to Poyarkov's listless speech, which was almost drowned out by the din of the inn. He caught fragmentary phrases. A fellow in a black suit, bearded and stout, was shouting:

"No one should take advantage of a national calamity to palm off counterfeit money . . ."

"That was aptly put," Poyarkov praised. "We speak well, but live badly. Recently I read in one of Tatiyana Passek's things: 'Peace unto the ashes of those departed who have never done anything in life, either good or bad.' How d'you like that?"

"That's odd," answered Clim, his mouth full.

Poyarkov was silent for a while; he drank some beer, then said with a sigh:

"There you have a sort of quiet despair . . ."

Marakuev appeared at the table; his cheek was tied up with a white kerchief, the knots of which stuck out from under his curly hair in two little white ears.

"I was sure that you'd be here," he said to Poyarkov, taking a seat at the table.

Putting their heads together, they exchanged whispers.

"Am I in the way?" asked Samghin. Poyarkov glanced at him from the corner of his eye and muttered:

"Don't be silly. How could you possibly be in the way?" And, with a sigh, he continued, "I said to him that the Marxists want to issue leaflets while we . . ."

Marakuev cut short his grumbling speech:

"Samghin, do you know Liutov well? He's an interesting chap. So is the deacon. But — how bestially they drink. I slept until five o'clock in the evening, but after that they stood me up on my legs and fell to tanking me up! I ran away, and now am traipsing all over Moscow. I've dropped in here twice . . ."

He went off in a fit of coughing, puckering his face, holding his side.

"I've swallowed my bellyful of dust — enough to do me all my life," he said.

In contrast to Poyarkov, this fellow was attuned to a lively and garrulous mood. Looking about him, like a man who has just awakened and does not understand where he is, Marakuev snatched from the tavern talk fragmentary phrases, little words, and, mockingly or pensively, told an anecdote about each theme he seized on. He was slightly under the weather, but Clim understood that his unusual, and even somewhat frightening mood could not be explained by this fact alone.

"If he's glad because he's been left among the living — he shows his joy ludicrously . . . Perhaps he talks only in order not to think?"

"It's stuffy in here, fellows — let's go out into the street," proposed Marakuev.

"I'm going home," Poyarkov said glumly. "I've had enough."

3

Clim did not want to sleep, yet he would have liked to step out of the sombre bustling of this day into a region of other impressions. He suggested to Marakuev that they ride to the Sparrow Hills. Marakuev nodded his head in silence.

"But, do you know," he said, seating himself in a fly, "the majority of those who were suffocated, who were trampled to death, were from the ranks of the so-called white-collar public . . . city folk and the young people. Yes. This was told me by a certain police surgeon, a relative of mine. My colleagues, the medicos, also say the same things. And then, I myself saw it. In the struggle for life men come to the top who are simpler than others, those who act instinctively . . ."

He was muttering something else, which Clim could scarcely hear through the rattling and shaking of the old, rickety carriage. He coughed and blew his nose, turning his face aside, and when they had come out of the city he proposed:

"Let's go on foot."

Ahead, on the black knolls, sparkled the lights of the inns. Beyond them, above the mass of the city, sprawled over the unseen earth, wavered the roseately-yellow glow of a conflagration. Clim suddenly recalled that he had not told Poyarkov about Uncle Chrysanth and about Diomidov. This surprised and shocked him. How could he have forgotten about it? But he immediately reflected that, Marakuev had not yet asked about Chrysanth, although he himself had said that he had seen him in a crowd. Seeking for some sort of impressive words, and failing to find them, Samghin said:

"Uncle Chrysanth has been crushed to death. Diomidov has been seriously hurt and is out of his head."

"No!" exclaimed Marakuev, very quietly. He halted, and looked into Clim's face silently, blinking in fright:

"Is it—is it fatal?"

Clim nodded his head. Marakuev, suddenly weak and pale, staggered off the road to a tree at one side. He leaned against it gasping:

"I can't go on."

"Are you sick?" Clim asked.

"Oh, you'll laugh at me, I suppose," Marakuev cried, "but I've seen so much! Why do things have to be this way? It's all inexplicable! What vileness! What brutes men are!" He seemed crushed and beaten.

Fearing that the student's legs were caving in under him, Clim held him up by his elbows, and Marakuev, tearing the bandage from his face with a sharp movement of his hand, began to wipe it across his forehead, his temples and his cheek and to dab his eyes with it.

"He's crying. He's crying," Clim said to himself. "Hell! Both he and Poyarkov are babies!" This was unexpected, incomprehensible. It dumbfounded him. This exalted chatterbox, this tireless disputant, this fellow who was always laughing; this sturdy, handsome lad, who resembled a nimble village accordeon-player, was leaning against a twisted tree, and sobbing like a woman before the eyes of an endless procession of glowering people with cigarettes in their teeth. A rough-looking fellow, stopping for a minute to make water, looked closely at Marakuev and cried out merrily:

"I say, Student, you must have swallowed a lot of hot stuff to make the tears come! I wish I could get as much . . ."

"I know that it's absurd to bawl," Marakuev was muttering.

A short distance away a rocket whizzed upward, hissing, and burst with a crackle, drowning out the enraptured hurrah of

children. Then a Bengal light flared up—its reflections spread all around. Marakuev's face was tinted an unnatural white, mercurial hue, became dull green, and, finally, a dark purple, as if it had been flayed.

"It's absurd, of course," he repeated, drying his cheeks with a quick, rabbit-like motion. "But look at the illumination, and the people celebrating. They're children, I tell you! No one understands. No one understands anything . . ."

A tattered fellow sprang from the ground beside Clim and winked at him.

"No, they understand excellently that the people are fools," he said in a low voice, smiling into a rather curly beard which was familiar to Clim. "They're our pharmacists—they know how to make us well with trifles."

Marakuev stepped toward him, quickly, as though he wanted to strike him.

"They make us well? who makes us well?" he began talking as loudly as if he were in Uncle Chrysanth's dining-room, and, in no more than two or three minutes, he was surrounded by half a dozen or more dim figures. They stood there, with a silent and monotonous similarity turning their heads now toward the fiery whirlwinds which made the inns seem to leap up and fall down, to appear and disappear, now toward Marakuev and Clim.

"He speaks boldly," someone remarked behind Clim's back; another voice said indifferently:

"A student—why bother? Let's go."

Clim Samghin stepped aside, fearing that one of Marakuev's auditors might grab him by the collar and lug him off to the police.

He felt reassured. In Marakuev's tears there was something which gratified him deeply; he saw that the tears were real, and

that they explained thoroughly the despondence of Poyarkov, who had lost his accurately chopped and firm phrases; explained, too, the amazed and guilty face of Lidia, who had hid a grimace of squeamishness behind her hands, and the gritting of Makarov's teeth — Clim no longer doubted that Makarov had gritted his teeth: he was bound to grit them.

All this, revealed unexpectedly, despite the will of those concerned, was the veritable truth, and to know it was beneficial, just as it had been to see Diomidov's naked, beaten-up and filthy body.

4

Clim began walking rapidly back to the city, eager thoughts lending him wings and urging him on:

"I'm stronger; I'd never permit myself to weep in the middle of a road or anywhere else for that matter. I'd never burst into tears because I've too much self-respect. The others gnash their teeth because they have no self-respect. It's precisely for that reason that they grimace. They're simply weaklings. In every one of them lurks something Nekhaevish . . . Nekhaevishness — that's it!"

The bonfire-like glow over Moscow illuminated the golden cupolas of the churches; they glittered like the helmets of the apathetic soldiers belonging to the fire brigade. The houses resembled clods of earth, plowed up by an enormous plow, which, having cut deep furrows through the earth, had exposed golden fire in it. Samghin felt that an honest plow was at work within him, plowing up dark perplexities and fears. A fellow with a cane in his hand, having jostled him, cried out:

"Are you blind? Where in hell are you going . . ."

The collision and the shout did not frighten off, or tangle up, Samghin's lively course of thought.

"Marakuev will most probably make friends with the curly-headed workman. How stupid it is to dream a revolution in a land whose people, in their thousands, crush one another in a struggle for the possession of a little parcel of the cheapest goodies and cookies. They're suicides."

This word quite satisfactorily explained to Samghin the catastrophe of which he did not want to think.

"They've crushed one another—and now they shout and admire fireworks. Makarov is right: the people are merely roe. Why wasn't it I who said that, instead of he? . . . And Diomidov was right, even though he's always been stupid; people ought to keep apart—then they're more understandable to one another. And every one must have his place for a single-handed struggle . . . and in single combat, men are more easily conquered. . . ."

Clim savoured these last few words; he repeated them in a low voice:

"More easily conquered. . . ."

For a moment an unpleasant picture harassed his memory. In his mind he saw a drunken fisherman kneeling in the middle of a kitchen floor over which lobsters crawled blindly and senselessly in all directions while a childish Clim hugged the wall in terror.

"These lobsters are the Liutovs, the deacons, and in general, the people who are not normal . . . the Turoboevs, the Inokovs. There awaits them, of course, the fate of that subterranean fellow, Iakov Platonivich. And so they are bound to perish. . . . How else could it be?"

Samghin felt that people of this type were on this day especially inimical to him. He must finish with them. Every one of them demanded particular evaluation, every one carried within himself something incongruous, indistinct. Like knotty

billets of wood they refused to lie down as closely to one another as was necessary in order for him to rise above them. Yes, it was imperative to string them together on some sort of stout thread. It was as necessary as knowing the move of every piece in a game of chess. From this point, Samghin's thoughts were slipping into Kutuzovishness. He began walking more briskly, remembering that it was not the first time he had thought of this — that he was always thinking of nothing but this.

"These frayed, disjointed people fit rather comfortably into their skins, each playing his little rôle. I, too, have a right to a comfortable place in life . . ." With this assurance Clim felt himself fortified.

He kept within himself this sensation of independence and firmness until the evening of the next day, when, sitting in Lidia's room, he told her in a tone of light irony about everything that he had seen the night before. Lidia was not well. She was feverish, and although beads of sweat glistened on her swarthy temples, she kept herself closely wrapped in a downy shawl of Penzeusk manufacture which hugged her shoulders. Her dark eyes were filled with wonder and fright. Often, as though forcing herself, she shifted her glance to her bed where, with his chest up, Diomidov lay, his eyebrows raised high as he stared at the ceiling. His uninjured hand was thrown back to support his head, and his fingers were nervously plucking his crown of yellow hair. He was silent, yet his mouth was open and his mangled face looked as though he were screaming. He had on a roomy night-shirt — its sleeves had crept up to his shoulders, so that they looked like crumpled wings; the unbuttoned collar left his chest exposed. About his body there was something cold and fish-like. There was a deep contusion on his neck which looked like gills.

Varvara, in night slippers and unkempt in a crumpled blouse,

put in her appearance. Her eyes were sombre. For a moment she listened to Clim's story, then disappeared, only to return a moment later.

"I don't know what to do!" she said. "I shan't have enough money for the funeral . . ."

Diomidov raised up his head a little, crying in a wheezing voice: "Am I dying then?" He began yelling, waving his arm: "I'm not dying! Go away . . . go away, all of you!"

Varvara and Clim left him. Lidia remained, endeavouring to pacify him. Even after Clim reached the dining room he could hear the injured man screaming: "Take me away to a hospital . . ."

"I don't believe that he's lost his mind," Varvara said loudly. "I don't like him, and I don't believe . . ."

Lidia came, holding her head in her hands. She sat down near the window in silence. Clim asked what the doctor's report had been. Lidia looked at him with an uncomprehending glance; from the dark shadows of her eye-sockets her eyes had become lighter. Clim repeated his question.

"Ribs crushed. Arm dislocated. But, mainly, a nervous shock . . . He was raving the whole night long: 'Don't crush me!' He demanded that the people be driven farther away from one another. For Heaven's sake, tell me! What does it all mean?"

"A fixed idea," said Clim.

The girl glanced at him again, without comprehending, then said:

"I wasn't speaking of that. Not about him. However, I don't know what it was I was speaking about."

"He wasn't normal even before," remarked Samghin insistently.

"Is anything normal? Is it normal for people to crush one

another, and, later on, play on their accordions? Outside our house until morning, they were playing an accordion."

Makarov entered, hung all over with bundles; he glanced at Lidia from under his brows:

"Have you slept?"

Without glancing at him, making no answer, she continued in a lower voice:

"'Normal' means having everything calm, doesn't it? But life becomes less and less calm — more and more restless."

"The normal organism demands the putting aside of unwholesome and unpleasant irritations," Makarov began grumbling angrily, untying bundles of bandages and cotton. "This is a law of biology. But, because of ennui and having nothing to do, we hail unwholesome irritations as if they were holidays. And the fact that certain half-idiots . . ."

Lidia jumped up, crying out in a stifled voice:

"Don't you dare talk that way before me!"

"And without you — may I?"

She ran away into Varvara's room.

"A tendency to hysteria," Makarov said. "Come on, Clim, help me to put on the cold pack."

Diomidov turned under their hands silently and submissively; but Samghin remarked that the vacant eyes of the sick man avoided looking at Makarov's face. And when Makarov proposed that he drink a spoonful of bromides, Diomidov turned his face to the wall.

"I won't. Go away."

Makarov was urging him without much eagerness, looking out of the window, without noticing that the liquid was dripping from the spoon on to Diomidov's shoulder. Thereupon Diomidov lifted his head and asked, distorting his swollen face:

"What are you torturing me for?"

"You must drink this," said Makarov apathetically.

Little blue sparks flickered in the injured man's eyes. He swallowed the mixture, and spat at the wall.

Makarov stood over him for a minute, altogether unlike himself, his shoulders hunched up, his back bent, crackling his fingers. Then, with a sigh, he said to Clim:

"Tell Lidia that I'll sit up tonight . . ."

5

Makarov went away. Diomidov lay with his eyes shut, but his mouth was open, and his face was once more shouting soundlessly. One might have thought that he had opened his mouth on purpose, because he knew that this gave his face a weird, deathlike quality. In the street drums were rattling deafeningly; the measured tread of hundreds of soldiers' feet shook the earth. A frightened dog was barking hysterically. It was far from cosy in the room, nor was it tidied up, and the air was stuffy from the odour of alcohol. A half-idiot was lying on Lidia's bed.

"Perhaps he lay here even when he was in good health," Clim thought.

He started, imagining Lidia's body in those cold, strangely white arms. He got up and fell to pacing the room, stamping without caring. He began stamping with still greater force when he saw that Diomidov had turned his blueish nose toward him and had opened his eyes, saying:

"I don't want to have him sitting up—let Lidia do it . . . I don't like him . . ."

Clim Samghin approached him and, stretching out his neck, threatening him with his fist, said in a very low voice:

"Keep still, you blessed louse! . ."

Clim, for the first time in his life, was experiencing the heady delectation of malevolence. He gloated over the frightened face of Diomidov, over his goggling eyes, and over the convulsiveness of his hand, which was dragging the pillow from under his head, at the same time that the head pressed the pillow down with ever greater force.

"Keep still. D'you hear me?" Clim repeated, and went away.

Lidia was sitting in the dining-room on the divan, holding a newspaper in her hands, but looking past it at the floor.

"How is he?"

"He's raving," said Clim with alacrity. "He's afraid of somebody. He raves about lice and bedbugs . . ."

Having frightened one who, even though a wretched little fellow, was still a human being, Samghin felt himself strong. He sat down beside Lidia and began boldly:

"Lidia, my dearest, you must drop all this: all this is merely 'thought-up,' unnecessary, and will be the end of you."

"Sh-sh," she whispered, raising up her hand apprehensively as she looked at the door, while he, lowering his voice and gazing at her tired face, continued:

"Leave these invalids, these theatrical persons, these spoiled people, for a simple life, for a simple love . . ."

He talked for a long while, not altogether clearly understanding what he was saying. By Lidia's eyes, Clim saw that she was listening to him trustingly and attentively. She even, as though involuntarily, nodded her head. A blush blazed up and expired on her cheeks; at times she guiltily let her eyes drop, and all this intensified his daring.

"Yes, yes," she whispered. "But quieter! He seemed to me to be so — out of the common run. But yesterday, in the dirt . . . And I didn't know that he was a coward. For he is a coward. I feel pity for him but . . . that's something else. It suddenly

turns out to be something else. I feel very much ashamed. I, of course, am to blame . . . I know that!"

Indecisively she put her hand on his shoulder:

"I'm forever blundering. Even you aren't the same as I'd come to think you are."

Clim attempted to embrace her, but she, evading him, got up and kicking the newspaper aside, walked to the door leading to Varvara's room and listened.

From the courtyard, through the open window, annoyingly crawled in the dismal wheezing of the pipes of a hurdy-gurdy. Somebody's envious and mocking shout floated in:

"Oh, but the undertakers are makin' a sweet thing of it!"

"Sleeping, probably," said Lidia softly, going away from the door.

Clim began speaking in a business-like tone of the fact that Diomidov ought to be packed off to a hospital.

"As for you, Lidia, you ought to drop the school. For you aren't studying anyway. It would be better for you to take up regular courses. It isn't actors we need but educated people. You have just seen in what a savage country we live."

And he indicated with his hand the window beyond which the hurdy-gurdy was lazily tootling a new song. Lidia was thoughtfully silent. Bidding her farewell, Samghin said:

"Just the same, remember I love you. This places you under no obligation, but it's a profound and serious matter."

6

Clim Samghin paced the streets buoyantly and without yielding the right of way to any people he met. Occasionally his cap was flicked by the pieces of tri-coloured drapery. There was a holiday look about the people on the streets; they had learned

how to forget quickly the misfortunes of their fellow men. Samghin occasionally glanced at their animated, exulting faces, and became fortified in his contempt for them.

"There's something sound in Diomidov's animal fear of mankind . . ."

In a narrow and deserted lane, Clim reflected that with Lidia, and with Preiss's views, one might live very calmly and simply.

But sometime later Preiss told Clim about the strike of weavers in Peterburg — told him about it with as much pride as if he himself had organized the strike, and as rapturously as though he were speaking of his own personal happiness.

"Have you heard anything about 'The League of Resistance?' Well, this is some of its work. A new era is beginning, Samghin — you'll see!"

And, amiably looking with his soft eyes into Clim's face, he asked:

"But you're still thinking about the length of any path to a desired goal, aren't you? Then believe me: the path which the working class is taking is the shortest of any. More difficult to follow, but shorter. If I understand you, you're not an idealist, and your way is this one — difficult, but direct!"

It appeared to Samghin that Preiss, who always spoke correctly in a pure Russian, on this occasion spoke with an accent, and in his joy one heard the enmity of a man of another race, a man who had been hurt and wanted vengeance on Russia.

It had ever been thus: that right after Preiss Marakuev would appear. These two went through life apparently in contiguous circles. Each revolved in his own circle of phrases, yet, at a single point common to both circles, they always coincided. Together they made a figure eight in thought. There was something suspicious about this, which inspired the surmise that the verbal encounters of Marakuev and Preiss had a demonstrative charac-

ter; this was a game to show others how superior the two thought themselves. As for Poyarkov, he had become more taciturn; he disputed less, did not play on his guitar so frequently, and all of him, somehow, had become dried up, drawn out. Probably this was because Marakuev was perceptibly becoming more intimate with Varvara.

At the funeral of her step-father Marakuev had led her by the arm between the graves, and, inclining his head toward her shoulder, whispered something to her; turning around to look, she had tossed her head like a hungry horse, and a sombre, threatening grimace spread over her face.

At Varvara's house, at the tea table, Marakuev sat down beside her; he ate her favourite marmalade, slapped with his palm a tattered book by Kravchinsky-Stepniyak, *Underground Russia,* and said courageously:

"We need hundreds of heroes in order to arouse the people to battle for freedom."

Samghin envied Marakuev's ability to speak vehemently, although it seemed to him that this man was retelling in prose wretched verses, which were always the same. Varvara listened to him in silence, her lips pursed up, her greenish eyes looked at the copper of the samovar as though there were some one sitting within the tea-machine and admiring her.

It was very unpleasant to observe the attention Lidia paid to Marakuev's speeches. With her elbows on the table, her temples pressed between her hands, she looked at the round face of the student with the eyes of one reading, just as if he were a book. Clim feared that this book interested her more than it should have. Occasionally Lidia, listening to stories about Sophia Perovskaya, about Vera Figner [51] would open her mouth a little, exposing a small row of tiny teeth. When she did this she looked unintelligent to Clim — at times completely wild

even, as though she were an untamed, half human creature of the forests.

"An education for heroines," he reflected, and from time to time found himself driven to insert cooling phrases into Marakuev's flaming speech.

"The Maccatees perish without conquering, whereas our need is to conquer . . ."

But this did not cool Marakuev in the least; on the contrary, he flared up even more vividly.

"Yes — to conquer!" he shouted. "But — in what sort of a struggle? In a struggle for a five copek piece? Or in order that the people may be better fed — which?"

With the gesture of an avenger he pointed Clim out to the girls, and exploded like a firework.

"He's one of those who think that the universe is governed only by hunger, that only the law of a struggle for a piece of bread reigns over it and that there is no place for love. To the materialists the beauty of a disinterested exploit is incomprehensible; to them the holy madness of Don Quixote is amusing; amusing, too, the Promethean daring which glorifies the universe."

Marakuev's lyrical tenor had an annoying whining undertone as he uttered the names of Fra Dolcino, Jan Hus, Masaniello.

"Don't forget Herostratos," said Samghin angrily. As was often the case with him, he was surprised to hear himself saying this and, in his amazement, ceased to hear the indignant shouts of his opponent.[52]

"But what if all these celebrated madmen are consciously indulging in Herostratism?" he began to ponder. "Perhaps many destroy temples solely for the sake of establishing their own names firmly upon their ruins. Of course, there are also those who destroy temples in order that — like Christ — they

may raise them up again in three days. But they do not raise them up."

Marakuev was shouting:

"You ought to have heard what was said by the workman we met — you remember? . . . And how he said it."

"I remember," said Clim. "This was when you . . ."

Turning red to his ears, Marakuev leapt up in his chair:

"Yes, precisely! When I was crying — yes! Perhaps you think that I am ashamed of these tears? You're wrong if you think that."

"Well, what of it?" retorted Clim, shrugging his shoulders. "It doesn't matter what you think I think. I'm not trying to make an exhibition of my thoughts. . . ."

7

After an angry interchange of half-a-score more rounds of retorts discharged at each other like rock-salt and slugs, they were silenced by the pacifying remarks of the girls. Then Marakuev and Varvara went off somewhere, and Clim asked Lidia:

"Well, now, does she want to play the rôle of a Perovskaya?"

"Don't be malicious," said Lidia, pensively looking out of the window. "Marakuev is right; in order to live, heroes are required. This is understood even by Constantin, who said: 'Nothing crystallizes except upon a basis receptive to crystallization!'"

"He's still in love with you," said Clim, approaching her.

"I can't understand why. He's so . . . He's meant for this sort of thing . . . No, don't touch me," she said, as Clim attempted to embrace her. "Don't touch me. I feel so sorry for Constantin that sometimes I hate him because he arouses nothing but pity."

Lidia went toward a mirror and, scrutinizing her face with a look which was incomprehensible to Clim, continued quietly:

"Love, too, demands heroism. Yet I can't be a heroine. Varvara can. Love, to her, is just another theatre. Someone, some invisible spectator, watches with calm appreciation how excruciatingly humans love one another, how they long to love. Marakuev says that this spectator is nature. I don't understand . . . Marakuev also, it seems, doesn't understand anything save the fact that one has to love."

Clim no longer wanted to touch her body. This alarmed him very much.

It was still early; the sun had just gone down, and its reddish reflections on the cupolas of churches had not yet died out. A cloud was bearing down from the North; he heard thunder — as though a bear were lazily waddling on soft paws over the roofs of iron.

"Do you know," Clim heard, "I have long since ceased to believe in God, but every time I feel something insulting, see something evil — I recall Him. Strange? Really, I don't know what my future will be!"

Clim was perfectly incapable of conversing on such a theme. But he began speaking as convincingly as he could:

"The time demands simple manly labour for the sake of the cultural enrichment of the land . . ."

And he stopped, seeing that the girl, having thrown her hands behind her head, was looking at him with a smile in her dark eyes — with a smile which abashed him again, as it had not abashed him for a long time.

"Why do you look at me that way?" he asked. Lidia answered very calmly:

"I think that you don't believe in what you say."

"But why?"

Without answering, she said a minute later:

"It's going to rain. And rain hard."

Clim decided that she wanted him to go.

Two days later as he was again going to her, he met Varvara on the boulevard, wearing a white skirt, a small pink blouse, and a red feather in her hat.

"Are you bound for our place?" she asked, and Clim noted mocking little sparks in her eyes. "Well, I'm going to the Sokolniki district. Want to come along? Lida? Why, she went home yesterday — didn't you know that?"

"Already?" asked Samghin, skilfully concealing his confusion and vexation. "She intended going tomorrow."

"I don't believe she wanted to go away at all, but that Diomidov bored her with his little notes and his complaints."

Clim heard but poorly her bird-like chatter, drowned out by the rattling of wheels and the whining of the tram wagons upon rounded rails.

"You're probably going away yourself soon?"

"Yes — day after tomorrow."

"Are you going to drop in to say good-bye?"

"Of course," said Clim, and reflected: "I'd love to bid you an eternal farewell, you loudly-dressed fool."

8

And really, it was high time to be going home. His mother was writing him letters unusually lengthy for her. She bestowed guarded praise on the enterprise and energy of the Spivak woman. She informed him that Varavka was very much taken up with organizing a newspaper. And towards the end of the letter she complained once more:

"Household cares have also increased, ever since Tanya Kuli-

kova died. This occurred unexpectedly and inexplicably. At times and no one knows why, some glass object will break, even when one does not touch it. She refused to confess and to take the viaticum. Prejudices sink their roots very deep in such people as she. Godlessness I deem a prejudice."

There arose in Clim's memory the colourless little figure of a human being who, without complaining against anything, without demanding anything, all her life long obediently served people who were strangers to her. It was even somewhat sad to think of Tanya Kulikova, a strange creature who, without philosophizing, without adorning herself with words, without avarice concerned herself with one thing only — that people might live comfortably.

"There's a Christian nature," he reflected. "An ideally Christian one."

But he immediately surmised that he must not stop with this epitaph; for even animals — dogs, for instance — also serve people, heart and soul. Naturally, people like Taniya are more useful than people who preach in a filthy basement about the stupidity of stone and wood; more necessary than half-wit Diomidovs, but . . .

He had no time to follow this thought to its end, because, from the corridor, there came the sounds of the heavy steps and the cooing voice of his next door neighbour. This neighbour was a corpulent man of thirty years, always clad in black; black-eyed, blue-cheeked; his thick black moustache was clipped short and was emphasized by thick lips of a very bright colour. He styled himself "a virtuoso on instruments of wood," but Samghin never heard this man playing on the clarionet, the oboe, or the flageolet. This black fellow led a mysterious nocturnal life. He slept until noon and until evening he slapped cards on a table, and in a crooning low voice sang the never-varying ballad:

Why follows he me,
Seeking me everywhere?

Of evenings he went off with a stout cane in his hand, pulling his derby hat down over his eyes, and, whenever they met in the corridor or in the street, Samghin reflected that secret service agents and card sharpers must have just such an appearance.

Now, having glanced into the corridor through the crack of his slightly open door, Clim saw that the black fellow was stuffing the florid little sister of the land-lady into his room, as one stuffs a pillow into a suitcase, and crooning through his nose:

"How is it that you run away from me, eh? Why do you run away from me, eh?"

Clim Samghin slammed his door in protest, sat down, sneering, on his bed, and was suddenly illuminated and warmed by a fortunate surmise:

"'How is it you run away from me?'" He repeated the persuasive words of the "virtuoso on instruments of wood." A day later he took the train home, firmly convinced that he had acted stupidly with Lidia—like a school-boy.

"'Love demands a gesture.'"

Beyond doubt, Lidia had run away from him—only by that, he decided, could one explain her sudden departure.

"At times life suggests apropos surmises to us."

9

His mother, having met him with hurried caresses, immediately rode off with the well-dressed Madame Spivak, explaining that she was going to invite the governor to the mass on the occasion of the school's opening.

In the dining-room at breakfast, Varavka sat in a Chinese robe of blue trimmed with gold, in a Tartar cap of lilac hue. He played with his beard, snorting concernedly, and saying:

"We live in a triangle of extremities."

Opposite him was firmly ensconced, with his elbows spread over the table, an elderly, baldish man, with a large face and very powerful eye-glasses upon his flabby nose; he was dressed in a grey frock-coat, in a coloured "phantasy" shirt, with a black string instead of a necktie. He ate with concentration and kept silent. Varavka, having mentioned a long double-barrelled name, added:

"Our editor."

And he continued as always, without encountering any difficulty in his search for words:

"The sides of the triangle are bureaucracy, renascent *Narodnichestvo,* and Marxism—in its treatment of the labour question . . ."

"I agree with you perfectly," said the editor, inclining his head; the little tassels of his string-tie jumped out of his waistcoat and hung over his plate; the editor hurriedly stuck them back in their place with his blunt red fingers.

He ate with great gusto and cautiousness. He watched attentively to see that the pieces of cold meat and ham were of equal lengths; he painstakingly cut off any surplus, pierced both pieces with his fork, and, before putting them into his mouth, between his broad blunt teeth, raised the fork to the level of his eye-glasses, and searchingly inspected the two-coloured slices. He ate even the cucumber with great cautiousness, as if it were fish—as though expecting to come upon a bone in a cucumber. He chewed slowly. The grey hair on his cheekbones stood up on end. On his chin a closely-curling short beard, accurately clipped, moved up and down as he chewed. He gave the impression of a sturdy, reliable

man, who was accustomed to do everything with just as much caution and assurance as he used in eating.

The gay, bear-like little eyes in Varavka's purple face benignly scrutinized the high smooth forehead, the staidly glistening bald pate, the thick, grey, and unmoving eye-brows. To Clim it seemed that the most remarkable thing on the editor's expansive face was his lower lip, of a purplish hue, hanging down as if the feelings of its owner had been hurt. This strange lip gave him a capricious expression — with such an offended lip do children sit among grown-ups, convinced that they had been punished unjustly.

The editor spoke without hurrying, very distinctly, stammering a little; it seemed as if he were placing an apostrophe before each vowel:

"That means: *Russian News,* told without academism, and, as you said, with a maximum of lively concern for the truly cultural needs of this region?"

"That's it, th-at's it!" said Varavka, and sniffed the air.

Somewhere, very near at hand, a thunder-clap crushed and crackled deafeningly, just as if someone had shot off a cannon at a wooden house; the editor disapprovingly glanced out of the window and informed them:

"An extremely rainy summer."

Clim rose and closed the windows; a downpour began riotously lashing the window panes; through their humid noise Clim caught the clipped words:

"Our feuilletonist will be an experienced one — it's Robinson, a celebrity. We need a literary critic — a man of common sense. We must contend against the unwholesome tendency in contemporary literature. But I have no such contributor in sight."

Varavka winked at Clim and asked:

"Eh? What d'you say, Clim?"

Samghin shrugged his shoulders in silence; it appeared to him that the lip of the editor hung down more aggrieved than ever.

Coffee was served. Through the din of the thunder and the angry plashing of the rain the sounds of a piano floated down from above.

"Come, now, have a try at it?" Varavka was saying.

"I'll think it over," answered Clim quietly.

Already everything seemed to Clim uninteresting and superfluous. Varavka, the editor, the rain and thunder. A certain force, lifting him up, was drawing him upstairs. When he walked out into the entry the mirror showed him a blanched face, austere and angry. He took off his glasses; having massaged his cheeks hard with his palms he found that his face had become softer, more lyrical.

10

Lidia was sitting at the piano, playing *The Song of Solweig*.

"Oh, you've arrived?" she said, extending her hand. All in white, strangely small, she was smiling. Samghin felt that her hand was unnaturally warm and that it trembled; her grey eyes had a kindly expression. The collar of her blouse was open and revealed a great deal of her swarthy breast.

"During a thunder storm music agitates one especially," Lidia said without taking her hand away. She spoke of some other things as well, but Clim was not listening to her. With extraordinary ease he lifted her up from her chair and embraced her, asking her dully and sternly:

"Why did you leave so suddenly?"

He had wanted to ask something entirely different but had not found the words; he acted as if he were in dense darkness. Lidia staggered back; he embraced her more firmly, and began kissing her shoulder, her breasts.

"Don't you dare," she said, pushing him away with her hands, with her knees. "Don't you dare, now . . ."

She tore herself away. Clim, swaying, sat down at the piano, and bent over the keyboard; waves of shivering shook him; trembling, he expected that he would fall into a faint. Lidia was somewhere far behind him; he heard her indignant voice, her hand tapping on the table.

"I love her insanely," he was persuading himself. "Insanely," he insisted, as though he were arguing with somebody.

Then he felt her light hand on his head — heard her alarmed question:

"What's the matter with you?"

"I don't know," he answered, putting his arms around her waist and pressing his cheek against her hip.

"Oh my God," said Lidia softly, no longer trying to free herself. She seemed to move closer to him, although she could hardly have been closer.

"What are we going to do, Lidia?" Clim asked.

Carefully unclasping his arms from her she went away. Samghin's drunken eyes followed her through a mist. In his mother's room she halted letting her hands fall beside her body, inclining her head as though she were praying. The rain lashed at the windows with ever greater fury; one heard the spluttering sounds of the water as it ran down the spout.

"Go away, please," said Lidia. Samghin rose and went toward her. It seemed as if it was someone else she was asking to go away. "I beg of you — go away!"

That which took place after these words was easy, simple, and took amazingly little time — a few seconds only, it seemed. Standing near the window, Samghin with amazement recalled how he had lifted the girl in his arms, while she, turning over on her back on the bed, was squeezing his ears and temples with her

palms, was saying something, and looking into his eyes with a blinding gaze.

Now, there she was, standing before the mirror adjusting her clothing, her coiffure; her hands trembled; her eyes, and their reflections in the mirror were wide open, unloving, and suffused with fright. She was biting her lips, just as though she were restraining pain or tears.

"My dearest," whispered Clim into the mirror, finding within himself neither joy nor pride, nor feeling that Lidia had come nearer to him; and not understanding how he must conduct himself, what he ought to say. He now saw that he was mistaken — Lidia was looking at him not with fright, but questioningly, with wonder. He walked up to her and embraced her.

"Let me go," she said, and began tidying up the rumpled pillows. At this, he went to the window once more, gazing out through the thick curtain of the rain at the leaves quaking on the trees, and at the grey globules hopping over the metal of the roof.

"I am persistent: I desired, and I attained," he was reflecting, feeling a necessity of consoling himself for something.

"Go away," Lidia said, looking at the bed with the same concerned and questioning glance. Samghin went away, after he had kissed her hand in silence.

Everything had taken place differently from what he had imagined it would. He felt that he had been cheated.

"But then, what was it I expected?" he questioned. "Merely that this might not resemble what I had experienced with Marguerita and Nekhaeva?"

And he succeeded in consoling himself:

"Perhaps it will always turn out so . . ."

But he had not consoled himself for long; the following moment an offensive thought came to him:

"It was just as though she had given me alms . . ."

XIX

I

ARRIVED at his own room he locked the door, lay down, and stayed there until evening tea; and, when he came into the dining room, he found Madame Spivak pacing there like a sentry — slender and graceful after her confinement, with breasts grown larger. She greeted him with the kindly equanimity of an old acquaintance, found that Clim had lost a great deal of weight, and went on speaking to Vera Petrovna, who was sitting at the samovar:

"There are seventeen girls and nine boys, whereas we need thirty pupils . . ."

From her shoulders, down her arm to the wrist, streamed a light stuff of pearl hue; the skin of her arms, showing through it, seemed oily. She was incomparably more beautiful than Lidia, and this irritated Clim. Irritating, too, was her doctoral and business-like speech, and the fact that she, being younger than Vera Petrovna by some fifteen years, talked with the latter as if she, Madame Spivak, were the elder.

When his mother asked Clim whether Varavka had offered him the editorship of the newspaper's department of criticism and bibliography, Madame Spivak immediately began, without waiting for what Clim might say:

"Do you remember? That was my idea, too. You have all the requisites for such a rôle; a critical turn of mind restrained by cautiousness of judgment and good taste."

She said this very kindly and seriously, but in the structure of her phrase Clim imagined he perceived a sneer.

"Yes, yes," concurred Clim's mother, nodding her head and licking her faded lips with the tip of her tongue, while Clim, scrutinizing the rejuvenated face of Madame Spivak, was reflecting:

"What does she want from me? Why has mother become such a close friend of hers?"

A golden torrent of sunlight burst in through the window. Madame Spivak shut her eyes, threw her head back, and became silent, smiling. Lidia's playing became audible. Clim, too, kept silent, looking through the window at the smokily-red clouds. Everything was vague, except one thing: it was necessary to marry Lidia.

"It seems I was too hasty," he suddenly said to himself, feeling that in his decision to marry there was something strained. He had almost said:

"I was mistaken."

He could have said this, inasmuch as he no longer found in himself that attraction for Lidia which had so long agitated him, not powerfully, perhaps, but persistently, nevertheless.

Lidia had not come to tea; she did not show up for supper either. For two days Samghin sat at home, intently expecting that now, at any minute, Lidia would come to him, or would call him to her. He had not the resolution to go to her of his own accord, and there was a pretext for not going; Lidia had announced that she was not feeling well—dinner and tea were served to her upstairs.

"This ill health is, probably, her usual attack of misanthropy," said Clim's mother, sighing.

"I observe strange characters among the young people of our time," she continued, sprinkling sugar over her strawberries. "We

lived more simply, more gaily, when I was younger. Those of us who went into the revolution, went with verses, and not with mathematical sums . . ."

"Well, Mother, mathematical sums are not inferior to verses," grumbled Varavka. "You can't drain a swamp with versicles . . ."

Having sipped a little wine, he puckered up his face, gargled his mouth, swallowed the wine, and, after a short reflection, said:

"But our young people are, really . . . rather tart! In the wing of the house, where the musicians are, one of the frequenters is this acquaintance of yours, Clim. What do you call him?"

"Inokov."

"That's it! A strange lad. I've never seen a person who, to such an extent, felt himself a stranger to everything and everybody. He's a foreigner."

And, after a searching look at Clim, with a rather keen little smile in his eyes, he asked:

"But you — don't you feel yourself a foreigner, too?"

"In an empire where Khodynkas are possible," Clim began angrily, because both his mother and Varavka had become tiresome to him.

It was at exactly this moment that Lidia appeared, wearing a strange little yellow robe, which reminded Clim of the vestments of the women in the pictures of Gabriel Rossetti.

She was in a mood of unwonted animation; making fun of her own ill health, she snuggled up to her father; very willingly told Vera Petrovna that the little robe had been sent to her by Alena from Paris. Her animation appeared to Clim suspicious and fortified that state of tenseness in which he had lived through these two days; he expected Lidia to say or do something unusual — perhaps something scandalous. But, as always, she paid

practically no attention to him, and, only when she was going upstairs to her room, did she whisper:

"Don't lock your door."

It was degrading to Clim to confess that this whisper frightened him; but he became frightened so that his legs began to shake; he even staggered, as though from a blow. He was certain that at night between him and Lidia, would take place something dramatic, something lethal to him. With this assurance it was that he went to his room, as one condemned to the rack.

2

Lidia made him wait for her a long time, almost until dawn. In the beginning the night was light, but stifling; through the open windows, from the garden, came the damp odours of earth, of grasses, of flowers. Then the moon vanished, but the air became still more humid, became tinted into a dark-blue turbidity. Clim Samghin, half-dressed, sat near a window, hearkening to the silence, occasionally shuddering from the incomprehensible sounds of the night. Several times he told himself hopefully:

"She will not come. She has changed her mind."

But Lidia did come. When the door opened noiselessly and a white figure arose on the threshold, he got up, moved to meet her — and heard the angry whisper:

"Shut the window — shut it!"

The room became filled with impenetrable darkness, and Lidia vanished within it. Samghin, with hands outstretched, sought her — but could not find her and struck a match:

"No need of that! Don't you dare! No need of light," he heard.

He caught a bare glimpse of Lidia sitting on the bed, hurriedly

disentangling herself out of her robe—her hands flickering brokenly; he drew near to her, and sank down on his knees.

"Hurry! Hurry!" she was whispering.

Invisible in the darkness, she waxed insane, shameless. She bit his shoulders, she moaned, and demanded, gasping:

"I want to experience . . . to experience . . ."

She aroused his sensuousness as greatly as an experienced woman might have; she was more avid than the business-like and mechanically dexterous Marguerita; more raging than the starved, impotent Nekhaeva. At times he felt that he would, at any moment, lose his consciousness, and that his heart might stop beating. There was one moment when it seemed to him she was crying; her unnaturally hot body quivered as though from sobs, held in and soundless. Yet he was not certain that such was really the case, although after this she stopped her insistent whispering in his ears:

"To experience . . . to experience."

He could not remember when she went away; he fell asleep, as one slain; and all of the following day he lived through as though in a dream; believing, and yet not believing, that which had taken place. He understood only one thing: on that night he had lived through something unusual, something he had never experienced, but not that which he had awaited, and not that which he had imagined. After several of such stormy nights he was convinced of this.

Lidia did not lose consciousness of herself for even an instant in his embraces. She had not told him any one of those endearing words of joy which had come so readily from Nekhaeva. About Marguerita, even though she had taken her sweet fill of caresses coarsely, there had still been something sonorous, something grateful. Lidia made love with her eyes shut, indefatigably, but joylessly and with a frown. An angry crease clove her high

forehead in two; she avoided kisses, pursing her lips hard, turning her face aside. When she would raise up her long eye-lashes, Clim beheld in her grey eyes an unpleasant glitter. All this no longer abashed him, and no longer cooled his voluptuousness, but with every assignation merely enflamed him more. But even more confusing and hindering did he find the persistent questionings of Lidia. At first, her questions had merely amused with their naïveté. Clim would smile a little, recalling the coarse spiciness of mediaeval *novellas*. By degrees, this *naïveté* was taking on a character of cynicism, and Clim began to feel behind the words of the girl an obstinate striving to surmise something which was, to him, unknown and uninteresting. He was fain to think that this prurience of Lidia's was due to her reading of French novels, but that she would soon become tired of it, would be stilled. But tire Lidia would not; demandingly gazing into his eyes, she would question him in a torrid whisper:

"What do you feel? You couldn't go on living without a desire to feel this — you couldn't — isn't that so?"

He counselled her:

"One must love without speech."

"In order not to lie?" she asked.

"Silence isn't falsehood."

"Then it must be cowardliness," said Lidia, and began to question him anew.

"When you feel pleasure — does it help you to understand me in some especial way? Has something changed within you, as far as I am concerned?"

"Of course," answered Clim, and regretted this, because she asked:

"But how? In what way?"

He could make no reply to these questions, and, with vexation,

feeling that this inability was making him smaller in the eyes of the girl, he reflected:

"Perhaps she only asked in order to bring me down to her level?"

"Drop it, please," said he, no longer with kindness. "These questions are out of place — they're childish."

"Well, what of it? You and I were both children once upon a time."

3

Clim had begun to notice in her something which resembled those fruitless sage reflections that, on a time, he too had been afflicted with. At times suddenly falling into a half-swooning state, she would lie without moving and in silence, for a minute, or two minutes, or five. During such moments he rested and became firmer than ever in the thought that Lidia was not normal, that her madnesses served only as a prologue to conversations. She caressed him frenziedly; it even seemed that, at times, she was violating herself, torturing herself. But, after such fits, Clim saw that her eyes looked upon him inimically or questioningly; with ever greater frequency he noted malignant sparks within her pupils. Thereupon, in order to extinguish these sparks, Clim would again caress her, forcedly and self-consciously. But, at times, there would arise in him a desire to cause her pain, to avenge himself for these malignant sparks. It was awkward to recall that at one time she had seemed to him incorporeal, imponderable. He began to think that it was precisely this girl whom he had desired to create some sort of special relations with, based on a deep, heart-felt friendship; that precisely she, and she only, would help him to find himself, to halt upon some solid ground. Yes, it was not her love, strange and eerie, which he had sought, but her friendship. And now he was once more deceived.

In answer to his attempts to arouse her interest in his sensual experiences, in his thoughts, he encountered silence, and occasionally a sneer which offended him, extinguishing his speeches at their very birth.

It seemed to him that Lidia was herself afraid of her sneers, and of the malignant little flame in her eyes. Whenever he put on the light, she would demand:

"Put it out!"

And, in the darkness, he would hear her whispering:

"And—is this all? For everybody the same thing: for poets, for cab-drivers, for dogs?"

"Listen," Clim would say, "You're a decadent. All this, in your case, is unwholesome. . . . Don't you remember *A Prayer for the Lonely Night?* . . ." And Clim recited:

We are poor souls, weary with fluttering
Over dead deeps whose depths we may not plumb,
Lone in the night, unseen, unseeing, numb,
Playthings of winds and hoarse waves muttering.
Our cries fall dead, for all our uttering;
Bleak is the night, and all the gods are dumb;
Of our end's knowing this is but the sum:
Wind-blown flames, we cease like rushlights spluttering . . .
Vast is the void; though we be chill and stark,
Still must we buffet on; yet neither rest
Nor mercy crave I—only this alone:
To feel a wing beat nigh me in the dark,
To feel a heart pulse close against my breast,
And know it beats in commune with my own . . .

"But, Clim, it can't be that *this* should satisfy you? It can't be that it was for *this* that the Romeos, the Werthers, the Abélards, the Juliets and the Manons all perished?"

"I'm no romantic," grumbled Samghin, and repeated to her: "In your case this is degenerative."

Thereupon, she would ask:

"I'm pitiful — yes? There is something lacking in me? Tell me what it is that I haven't got?"

"Simplicity," Samghin answered, unable to answer otherwise.

"The same simplicity that's to be found in cats?"

He could not find the resolution to say to her:

"That which the cats have you possess to excess."

Ragingly, and even malevolently caressing her, he mentally suggested to her:

"Burst into tears! Burst into tears!"

She moaned yet did not weep, and Clim once more barely restrained the desire to insult her, to debase her till tears came.

Once, in the darkness, she began to question him annoyingly as to what he had experienced when he had first possessed a woman. After reflecting, Clim answered:

"Fear. And — shame. And you? There, above?"

"Pain and revulsion," she immediately answered him. "That which was frightful I experienced here, when I came to you of my own accord."

Having kept silent for a while, and moving away from him, she said:

"It was not even fearful, but something greater. It was the same as dying. Probably thus must people feel at the last minute of their lives, when there's no longer any pain, but merely a falling downward. A flight into the unknown, into the incomprehensible."

And, after a new silence, she said in a whisper:

"And there was a moment when something died, when something perished within me. Some kind of hope. I — don't know.

Then — contempt for myself. Not pity. No — it was contempt. That's why I cried — do you remember?"

Regretting that he could not see her face, Clim also kept silent for a long while before he could find words which would not be stupid:

"In your case it isn't love, but an investigation of love."

Quickly and submissively she answered in a whisper:

"Embrace me. Harder!"

For several days she behaved submissively, without asking about anything, and was even, seemingly, more restrained in her caresses; but after this Samghin heard anew, in the darkness, her hot, grating whisper:

"But do agree, now, that this does not suffice for man!"

"What is it you demand, then?" Clim wanted to ask, but, having restrained his indignation, did not.

He felt that "this" was to him fully sufficient, that everything would be well if only Lidia were to keep silent. Her caresses did not pall. He was amazed himself to discover his strength in such a tempestuous life, and understood that this strength was given him by Lidia, by her ever strangely-hot and indefatigable body. He was by now beginning to be proud of his physiological endurance, and reflected that if he were to tell Marakuev of these nights that queer fellow would never believe him. These nights had engulfed him completely. Taken up with a desire to tame the wordy riotousness of Lidia, to make her simpler, easier, he thought of nothing save her, and desired but one thing: that she might forget her incongruous questions, that she might not season his honeymoon with an irritating and corrosive poison.

She would not be tamed, although it seemed that the angry little flames in her eyes sparkled less frequently now. And when she did question him, it was not importunately — but as if a new mood had arisen in her. This was revealed startlingly. In the

middle of the night, having jumped off the bed, she ran to the window, opened it, and, half naked, sat down on the window-sill.

"You'll catch cold — it's rather fresh out," Clim warned her.

"What ennui!" she answered rather loudly. "What ennui there is in these nights, in this silence of the sleeping earth, and in the sky. I felt myself in a pit . . . in an abyss."

"There it goes — now she imagines herself a fallen angel," reflected Samghin.

4

He was made uneasy by a premonition of serious unpleasantnesses; at times the fear that Lidia would tire and repulse him would suddenly blaze up — while at others he himself desired this. Already — not for the first time — he had noticed that a timidity before Lidia was returning to him; and that almost always this was followed by a wish to interrupt her abruptly, to avenge himself upon her for being timid before her. He saw himself stultified, and understood but poorly what was going on about him. And then, too, it was not easy to grasp the significance of that great to-do which Varavka indefatigably ignited and fanned. Almost every day, in the evenings, the dining room would be filled by people new to Clim, and brandishing his short arms, toying with his greying beard, Varavka would announce:

"Witte's most tactless interference with the weavers' strike has given it a political character. The government seems to be convincing the workers that the theory of class-struggle is a fact, and not an invention of the socialists — d'you understand?"

The editor silently and affirmatively nodded his polished pate, and his purple lip hung down more aggrieved than ever.

One man in a velvet jacket, with a showy Windsor tie, and the large nose of a woodpecker dominating his hectically flushed face, grumbled in a low voice:

"The class-struggle is no utopia, if one man has a house of his own while another has nothing but tuberculosis."

When he was introduced to Clim, he extended a perspiring hand, and, having glanced into his face with feverish eyes, asked:

"Narakov — 'Robinson' — you may have heard of me?"

He was restless; he jumped up frequently and impetuously; frowning, he would glance at his black watch, twisting his sparse little beard into an awl, thrusting it into his bitten lips; shutting his eyes, he uneasily contracted the skin of his face into an ironical smile and distended his nostrils wide, as though repulsing an unpleasant odour. At his second meeting with Clim he informed him that for the feuilletons of Robinson one newspaper had been closed down, and another suspended for three months; several newspapers had received warning, and in all the towns where he had worked the governors always turned out to be his enemies.

"A comrade of mine, a statistician — he recently died in jail from typhoid — has nicknamed me 'the scourge of governors.'"

It was difficult to understand whether he was jesting or was speaking seriously. Clim immediately noticed an unpleasant feature about him: this man scrutinized all people through his eyelashes, mockingly and inimically.

Sitting deeply in his chair was Varavka's partner in the publishing of the newspaper — Pavlin Savelievich Radeëv, the proprietor of two steam flour-mills — a round little fellow with the face of a Tartar, which was set within a neatly clipped little beard, and with kindly clever eyes under a bulging forehead. Varavka, it was evident, respected him very much, glancing at the Tartar face questioningly and expectantly. In answer to Varavka's indignation against the political cynicism of Constantin Pobedonostzev, Radeëv said:

"A bedbug's luck consists precisely of his vile odour."

This was the first phrase which Clim had heard from the lips of Radeëv. It struck him all the more since it had been said so strangely, somehow, that it did not go at all with the fleshy, staid little figure of the miller and his taut, strong face of a waxen — or, to put it more correctly — of a copper hue. His little voice was colourless, weak; he spoke with an emphasis on the sibilants, with a certain strained effect, as people speak after a prolonged illness.

"Weren't you the model from whom Boborykin painted his 'modern Socrates'?" Robinson asked him, without standing on ceremony.

"A poor work — not without truthfulness, however," replied Radeëv, holding his plump little hands on his belly, and twirling his thumbs. "No, I wasn't the model, of course, but still it was done from nature. I suppose even among the merchant class there have been born a number of reflective people."

Samghin in the beginning had thought that this merchant was probably cunning and cruel. When they began speaking about the holy relics of Seraphim Sarovsky, Radeëv, with a sigh, said:

"Oh, this creating of dead saints will bring us to no good — and that of living ones still less. And, do you see, we do all this not from our own free will, not from necessity, but through habit — it's just the custom! It would be better if we agreed that we're all sinners, and that we're all supposed to live in the same sinful, earthly way."

He was fond of speaking, and palpably flaunted his ability to speak freely on any subject in his own words. Having listened closely to his colourless little voice, and his demurely quiet, rounded words, Samghin discovered in Radeëv something pleasant and conciliatory.

"You, Timophei Stepanovich, have remarked correctly: great is the schism ripening in our younger generation. Is it necessary

for us to become angry over this fact?" he asked, smiling with his little amber eyes—and he himself answered, turning in the direction of the editor:

"Well, perhaps it isn't. To me, now, it seems that our government will find quite useful the collision of those who believe according to Hertzen and the Slavophiles, leaning upon Nikolai the Miracle Worker as personified by our little *mouzhik,* with those who are fain to believe according to Hegel and Marx, leaning upon Darwin."

He took a deep breath, began to twirl his little thumbs more rapidly, and caressed the editor with a little smile; the editor stretched up his lower lip, while his upper one he drew out in a straight line; it made his face shorter and wider, and he seemed to smile;—behind the lenses of his glasses stirred formless, turbid blotches.

"This, of course, is the main line of the schism," continued Redeëv, still more chantingly and softly. "But there is to be noted another line as well, also useful: there are to be noticed youths who are learning to reason not only about the grievances of the people but also about the destinies of the Russian government, about the great Siberian road toward the Pacific Ocean, and about other things just as interesting."

Pausing, probably for the sole purpose of having his auditors ponder the significance of what he had said, the miller shuffled his stubby little legs over the floor, and continued:

"The individualistic mood of certain people is also not without its uses; perhaps under them is hid a Socratic concentration in one's own self, and a defence against the sophists. No, our youth is growing up interestingly and holding out great promise. It's quite remarkable that the contumacious preaching of Liev Tolstoi doesn't find among our youth many disciples and apostles—doesn't find them, as far as we can see."

"Yes," said the editor; and, taking off his eye-glasses, revealed under them meek little eyes with diffused pupils.

Radeëv was always listened to attentively; Varavka especially sunk his keen gaze into the coppery face of the miller, into his rather strong, leech-like lips.

"The miller's an excellent hand at repartee," said he, smiling unctuously. "A bestially child-like soul!"

Clim Samghin had noted something in common between Varavka and Radeëv: Varavka's arms were short—the miller had amusingly short little legs.

While Inokov had said about Radeëv:

"It'd be an interesting thing to get a look at him in the baths; when he's naked he probably resembles a samovar."

Inokov had just appeared from somewhere in Orenburg, from the Turgaiskaya region; he had been in Krasnovodsk—and in Persia. Eccentrically arrayed in canvas clothing, grey, as though he had been dusted through and through to his very bones, sandals on his bare feet, in a wide-brimmed hat of straw, long haired, he had come to resemble an animated portrait of Robinson Crusoe from the jacket of some cheap edition of this bible of the unconquerable. Pacing the dining room with the walk of a crane, he was peeling off with his nail little white scales of skin from his sun-burned nose, and was saying resolutely:

"These Bashkiri, these Kalmucks, now, burden the earth in vain. They don't know how to work; they've no aptitude for learning. The Persians, too, are a people who have outlived their time."

Radeëv gazed upon him benignly, and moved his smoothly combed eyebrows, while Varavka egged him on:

"Well, if it were up to you, how would you dispose of them? Massacre them? Starve them to death?"

"They're autumn leaves," reiterated Inokov, snorting through his nose, as though expelling the hot dust of the *steppe*.

"They're autumn leaves," Clim repeated mentally, observing these people, incomprehensible to him, and finding that something had moved them from their natural positions. Every one of them, if he were to have greater clarity, called for certain additions, corrections. And such people there were flickering before him in ever greater numbers. It was becoming perfectly unbearable to be stamping one's feet in a round dance of those who were excessively and fatiguingly brainy.

5

Lidia was coming down from above. She would take her seat in the corner, at the piano, and with the eyes of a stranger look out from there, muffling up her chest, through habit, with her gauze scarf. The scarf was blue—it threw unpleasant shadows on the lower part of her face. Clim felt content because she was silent, certain that if she were to speak, he would find himself contradicting her. In the daytime, and in the presence of others, he did not love her.

His mother was dignified toward her guests; she smiled condescendingly; in her conduct there was something unnatural to her, something assumed and sad.

"Do eat," she regaled the editor, Inokov, and Robinson, and with one finger pushed toward them platters with bread, butter, cheese, and jam. She called Madame Spivak "Liza," and exchanged glances with her as if their thoughts were the same. As for Spivak, she animatedly disputed with everybody—with Inokov more frequently than with the others, probably because he walked around her like a calf tied by a rope to a stake.

Spivak felt herself a hostess rather than a guest, and this made Clim watch her suspiciously.

When all the strangers disappeared, Spivak went strolling with Lidia in the garden, or sat upstairs with her. They warmly discussed something, and Clim was always beset by a desire to eavesdrop unnoticed, and to find out what they were speaking about.

"Look this over — it's interesting!" she would say to Clim, and thrust into his hands little yellow volumes of Réné Doumic, of Pellissier.

"What is she up to — is she educating me?" conjectured Clim, recalling how Nekhaeva had also bestowed upon him reproductions of the pictures of the pre-Raphaelites, of Rochegrosse, Von Stück, Klinger, and volumes of verse written by decadents.

"Everyone strives to fasten upon you something of his own, in order that you might come to resemble him, and thus be more comprehensible to him. Whereas I don't fasten anything upon anybody," he reflected with pride, yet very attentively he lent an ear to Spivak's ideas of literature, finding that whenever she spoke about the new Russian poesy he agreed with her.

"These young people are in very much of a hurry to free themselves from the humanitarian tradition of Russian literature. In reality they're as yet merely translating and transcribing the Parisian poets; they are also amicably criticizing one another, speaking of a great event in Russian literature whenever a petty literary theft occurs. It seems to me that after Tiutchev, it's unintelligent to be enraptured with the decadents of Montmartre."

Once in a rare while, with the careful tread of a chastised cat, Ivan Dronov would come into Varavka's room with a portfolio under his arm, very neatly dressed, and in shoes which creaked unnaturally. He exchanged greetings with Clim, as a sub-

ordinate would with the son of a strict superior, a falsely modest expression on his snub-nosed face.

"How are you getting along?" asked Samghin.

"Not badly, thank you," answered Dronov, strongly emphasizing the pronoun. From then on they both used the politer "you" instead of the familiar "thou," and, when they were saying farewell to one another, Dronov imparted to Clim:

"Marguerita asked me to send her regards; she's now giving instructions in needle-work at the convent school."

"Yes?" said Samghin.

"Yes. I meet her often."

"Why should he tell me that?" reflected Samghin uneasily, following him with his eyes.

He immediately forgot about Dronov, for Lidia was engulfing all his thoughts, inspiring within him an alarm ever more oppressive. It was evident that she was not the same girl as he had imagined her. No — not the same. All the more fascinating physically, she was already beginning to regard him with an offensive condescension, and more than once he had caught a note of irony in her voice.

"Well, tell me then — what is it that has changed within me?"

He wanted to say:

"Nothing."

He could have said:

"I've come to understand that I was mistaken."

But he had not enough fortitude to tell the truth — and besides there was no assurance that it *was* the truth, and that it *must* be told. He replied:

"It's too early to speak of that."

"Nothing has changed within me," Lidia prompted him in a whisper — and her whisper in the sultry darkness of night was becoming a nightmare for him.

There was something especially depressing in the fact that she whispered her incongruous questions — as though she herself were ashamed of them — while what she said sounded more and more shameless. On one occasion, when he was saying something consoling to her, she stopped him:

"Wait a moment — where's that from?" She thought for a while and frowned: "It is from Stendhal's book, *On Love.*"

Jumping off the bed, she rapidly paced the room, over the dense and solemn tree-shadows that marked the floor. Her legs in black stockings blended strangely with the shadows; over her shift tinged blueishly by the light of the moon, shadows glided also; she seemed to be without legs, and flying. Having glanced through a window, she stopped before a mirror, her eye-brows sternly frowning. She scrutinized herself in the mirror so frequently and so attentively that Clim found it both strange and amusing. She would stand there biting her lips, her eye-brows raised, and would stroke her bosom, her abdomen, her hips. Save for her naked body there was nothing reflected in the mirror but the wall, papered in a dark tone. It was most unpleasant to see Lidia doubled: one living figure was swaying on the floor; the other was gliding over the motionless void of the mirror.

Clim asked her harshly:

"Do you think you're already pregnant?"

Her arms sank along her body; she turned around rapidly, asking in affright:

"Wha-at?"

And, seating herself on a chair, she said in a piteous whisper:

"But, then, children don't always follow? And then, it isn't six weeks yet . . ."

"Well, what are you upset about? Are you afraid of giving

birth?" asked Clim, deriving pleasure from teasing her. "And what have weeks to do with this?"

Without making any answer, she hurriedly began to dress.

"And yet, you remember, you wanted a boy and a girl?"

She was dressing as rapidly as though she wanted to hide herself with all possible speed.

"Did I?" she muttered, "I don't remember."

"You were then about ten years old."

"Now boys and girls hold no attraction for me."

And, bending down, putting on her slippers, she said:

"It isn't everybody that has the right to bear children."

"Ugh, what a philosophy!"

"Yes," she continued, walking up to the bed. "Not everybody. If you create wretched books or pictures, that isn't so very bad; but there ought to be a punishment when it comes to producing wretched children."

Clim grew indignant.

"Where do you get these senile thoughts? It's funny to listen to you. Is it Spivak who says all this?"

She went off with her light step, carefully stepping on her toes. The only thing lacking was to have her lift up her skirt a little — then it would have looked just as if she were walking over a miry street.

6

Clim perceived that with ever greater frequency and with inexplicable rapidity unpleasant discussions were springing up between Lidia and himself — yet do away with this he could not.

One night, tired by her constant questioning, he nonchalantly advised her:

"Read *The Hygiene of Marriage* — there is such a book; or else pick up a school-book on midwifery."

Lidia took her seat on the bed; she embraced her knees, placed her chin upon them, and asked:

"According to you, everything is reduced to midwifery? Wherein is the need for poems, then? What evokes the poems?"

"Well, I'll refer you to Makarov, as to that."

Smiling, he added:

"Marakuev has very successfully dubbed Makarov 'The Provençal Troubadour from Knock-Kneed Alley.'"

Lidia turned toward him, and smoothing his eye-brows with the sharp nail of her little finger, said:

"You speak poorly. And always as though you were going through an examination."

"That's just it," answered Clim. "That's because you're forever questioning me."

Her voice began to sound on two notes, as in her childhood.

"I often agree, but it's only in order not to dispute with you. One could dispute with you about everything, but I know it's useless. You're slippery. . . . And you have no words which are dear to you."

"I can't understand why you say this," grumbled Samghin, surmising that some sort of a decisive moment was coming on.

"Why I say this?" she repeated his question after a pause. "A certain opera has the song: 'Love? What is Love?' I've been thinking of this ever since I was thirteen years old, from the day when for the first time I felt myself a woman — and hated it! I can't think of anything else but love."

It appeared to Samghin that she was speaking abstractedly, guiltily. A desire arose to see her face. He struck a match, but Lidia, as always, said with irritation, covering her face with her palm:

"No need of light."

"You like to play in the dark," jested Clim—and repented: "That was foolish."

The wind was noisy in the garden; the leaves scraped on the window panes, the branches beat a rapid tattoo against the shutters, and one could hear an additional noise, an incomprehensible soughing, as though a little dog were whimpering softly in its sleep. These sounds blending with Lidia's whispering, added a sorrowful tone to her words:

"We must not lie to each other," Samghin heard. "People lie in order to live more comfortably, whereas I am not seeking any comforts—understand that! I don't know what I want. Perhaps you're right: there is within me something senile—it's precisely because of that that I have no love for anything and that everything seems to me untrue, not as it should be."

For the first time during all his liaison with her, Clim heard in her words something which was comprehensible and akin to him.

"Yes," said he. "There is a great deal of thought-up stuff—I know."

And, for the first time, he felt a desire to caress Lidia in some special manner, to move her to tears, to unusual confessions, in order that she might expose her soul just as easily as she had grown accustomed to exposing her body. He felt certain that at any moment he would face something overwhelmingly simple and sage, that he would extract out of all he had experienced a bitter, yet a medicinal juice, for himself and for her.

"It seems to me, now, that the happy folk are not the young but the intoxicated," she went on whispering. "All of you did not understand Diomidov, thinking him mad, and yet he has put the thing amazingly: 'Perhaps God is an invention, yet

churches exist; whereas all that's necessary is but God and man — stone churches aren't. The actual confines one.'"

"It's the anarchism of a half-idiot," hurriedly uttered Clim. "I know this; I heard: 'Wood is a fool, stone is a fool,' and so forth. . . . Bosh!"

He felt thoughts of the utmost significance burgeoning within him. But for their expression his memory perversely prompted the words of others, which were probably already familiar to Lidia. Searching for his own words, and desiring to stop Lidia's whispering, Samghin placed his hand on her shoulder, but she let her shoulder drop so quickly that his hand slipped down to her elbow, and when he squeezed it, Lidia demanded:

"Let me go."

"Why?"

"I'm going away."

And she went, leaving him as always, in darkness, in silence. It happened thus not infrequently — she would suddenly go away as though frightened by his words; but this time her fright was especially offensive — she drew after her, like a shadow, all that he had desired to tell her. Jumping down from the bed Clim flung a window open; a wind rushed into the room; it bore in an odour of dust, began angrily flipping the leaves of a book on the table, and helped Samghin to become indignant.

"Tomorrow I'm going to have it out with her," he decided, shutting the window, and lying down in bed. "I've had enough of her caprices and her chattering!"

It seemed to him that Lidia's mood was becoming perfectly elusive, and he was already calling it two-faced. For the second time he was noticing that even physically Lidia was changing, from behind the familiar features of her face another face was coming through which had been hidden — a face strange to

him. She would suddenly be possessed by attacks of tenderness toward her father; toward Vera Petrovna; and attacks of some sort of a school-girlish "crush" on Elizaveta Spivak. There were days when she gazed upon all people with eyes which were not her own — softly, commiseratingly, and with such sadness that Clim, with alarm, thought that at any second now she would begin to repent, would absurdly tell them about her affair with him, and would burst into black tears. He liked "black tears" very much; he deemed this one of his good conceits.

He observed how solicitously Lidia was looking after his mother, whose manner toward her was polite but perfunctory. She never looked into the girl's face, but always at her forehead, or above her head. One evening, at tea in the dining room, Vera Petrovna was condescendingly instructing Lidia:

"The right to criticism is based either upon firm belief or upon exact knowledge. Your beliefs I cannot share, while your knowledge, you'll admit, is insufficient. . . ."

Lidia, without hearing her out to the end, uttered pensively:

"Michael, our coachman, yells at people, and yet he himself can't see very well, and one is always afraid that he'll run over somebody. By now, his eyesight is downright poor. Why don't you have a doctor look at him?"

Having glanced questioningly at Varavka, Vera Petrovna shrugged her shoulders, while Varavka muttered:

"Medical care? He's sixty-four . . . there's no cure for that."

Lidia went away, and a few minutes later appeared in the garden, animatedly speaking with Spivak. Clim heard her question:

"But why must I set to rights the mistakes of others?"

At times Clim felt that Lidia bore herself toward him as dryly and strainedly as if he had been at fault in something before

her, and although he had already been forgiven, this forgiveness had not been an easy matter.

Recalling all this, he reflected once more:

"Yes, I'm going to have an explanation from her, no later than tomorrow."

7

In the morning, Varavka, shaking bread crumbs out of his beard, imparted to Clim:

"To-day I am introducing the editorial staff to the cultural forces of our city. Among seventy thousand inhabitants there turned out to be fourteen such forces — yes, brother! Three forces are under the open surveillance of the police, while of the remaining ones, most probably almost all are under covert surveillance. *Sehr Komisch*. . . ."

He fell into thought, squeezed out half a lemon into his glass of tea, and said with a sigh:

"Our government — truly, brother, 'tis a most original government; its tiny head is out of all proportion. Small for its torso. I sent Lidia off to the country house, to invite Katin the writer. Well now, are you going to do the criticisms — eh?"

"I'll have a try at it," answered Clim.

The evening of the fourteen forces reminded him of the sabbatical sessions around the fish-pie at Uncle Chrysanth's.

Gussev the lawyer, who had aged a great deal, had grown a belly, and thrusting it against the frail little figure of the male Spivak, listlessly waxed indignant against the spread of balalaikas in the army.

"The shepherd's-pipe, the horn, the bagpipes — these are the true instruments of the people. Our people is a lyrical poet — the balalaika does not respond to its spirit. . . ."

Spivak, gazing at his chest through the black lenses of his spectacles, answered timidly:

"I think that this isn't the truth, but simply a habit of saying 'of the people' instead of 'wretched stuff.'"

And he turned to his wife:

"I'm going to see if he's crying."

He ran off, while Gussev began to harangue Kostin, the statistician,—a fellow with the puffy face of a country wife:

"I, of course, agree that Alexander the Third was a stupid Czar, but, nevertheless, he has pointed out to us a regular path of immersion into nationality."

The statistician, known to all the city for his habit of getting into jail, was good-naturedly smiling, enumerating:

"Parochial schools, the vodka monopoly. . . ."

Robinson put in his oar:

"If we are really to immerse ourselves in nationality, then we mustn't abjure the balalaika either."

Kostin, interrupting Robinson, was shouting:

"All this is the politics of thrusting in blades of straw as brakes for the wheels of history. . . ."

Glumly smiling, Inokov said to Clim:

"The habitual jail-bird is speaking about history just as a faithful slave might about his mistress. . . ."

Inokov was sinisterly clad in a black shirt of broadcloth, belted with a broad strap; his black trousers were tucked into his boots; he had grown very thin. Scrutinizing everybody with angry eyes he and Robinson went often to the table for more vodka. And always following them, sideways like a crab, went the editor. Clim twice heard him saying to the feuilletonist in a low voice:

"Go easy on that stuff, Narokov,—it's bad for you. . . ."

Katin the writer held sway at the table. He had not aged—save that grey little tongues of hair had appeared at his temples, and his plump cheeks were covered with a fine arabesque of red little veins. He rolled from corner to corner like a little ball;

he caught people, dragged them toward the vodka, and animatedly teased the editor:

"So we're going to shake the inhabitants up, Maximich? Raise up a water spout? But don't you go givin' 'em any Marxism. You won't? Better not! I'm of the old faith. . . ."

And nibbling at some cold dainty, puckering his lips from delight, he was saying:

"No, this is, after all, only a factory mushroom—it doesn't inspire one! But my wife's sister, now, has learned to pickle mushrooms famously!"

Gussev's associate, the young lawyer Pravdin, buttoned up in his well-made frock, as smoothly combed and as perfumed as a hair-dresser, was saying instructively to Tomilin and Kostin.

"The undisputable norms of right. . . ."

Tomilin was smiling his brassy smile, while Kostin, gently patting his own unnaturally developed buttocks, retorted in a soft little tenor:

"In those same norms of yours are hidden all the foundations of social conservatism."

A notary's widow, Kozakova, who, as a girl, had taken courses, and now was an active worker in the field of extensional education, a woman in *pince-nez*, red and stern of face, was demonstrating to the editor that the theories of Pestalozzi and Froebel could not be adapted in Russia.

"We have Pirogov—we have . . ."

Robinson interrupted her, reminding her that Pirogov had recommended that children be birched, and began declaiming Dobroliubov's lines:

But birch not vulgarly the dolt,
Hold seemliness all things above—
Birch in a manner not to jolt
Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogóv . . .

"These lines are execrable; just the same, throughout Europe, the children are flogged," Kozakova declared resolutely.

Dr. Liubomudrov voiced his doubts:

"What! Throughout Europe? I don't think they really flog them, only strike their hands with a ruler."

"And flog them as well," insisted Kozakova. "In England, too, they flog them."

Dressed in a heavy blue woollen jacket and voluminous breeches, which came down low over his blunt-toed boots, Tomilin paced the dining room as he would a market-place; he mopped his copiously sweating, red-haired face with his handkerchief; he looked closely and listened intently, and only on rare occasions would condescendingly let drop concise little phrases. When Pravdin, a passionate devotee of the theatre, called out to somebody:

"Pardon me, but is it a prejudice that the theatre is a school, that the theatre is a spectacle?"—Tomilin said, smiling:

"All life is a spectacle."

Captain Gortalov, an erstwhile instructor in a military school, who was banned from being an active pedagogue, a staid gourmet, a talented floriculturist and horticulturist, rather spare, sinewy, with burning eyes, was demonstrating to the editor that the sun's protuberances appear to be the result of hard bodies falling upon the sun and splashing its mass; while at the tea-table, Radeëv, firmly ensconced between two ladies, assured them:

"Being somewhat—being rather a little—bookish, and knowing Europe, I find that in its intelligentsia Russia has created something perfectly exceptional and of enormous value. Our county physicians, our statisticians, our village schoolmasters, our writers, and in general, the people who follow spiritual callings, are an extraordinary treasure. . . ."

"Is he jesting? Is he ironic?" Clim Samghin wondered, listening to the smooth, feeble little voice.

Captain Gortalov, with the step of a soldier on parade, approached Radeëv and extended to him his lanky hand.

"A correct appraisal. A beautiful idea. My idea. And, therefore: the Russian intelligentsia must understand itself in order to be certain, single, whole. Precisely. As, for instance, the order of the Johannites, the Jesuits — yes! The intelligentsia, as a whole, must become a single party and not split up into parts! This is suggested to us by the entire course of contemporaneity. This ought to be suggested to us also by the instinct of self-preservation. We have no friends, we are strangers from a strange land. Yes, the bureaucrats and the capitalists are enslaving us. To the people we are eccentrics, strangers."

"You're right — we are strangers!" lyrically exclaimed Katin the writer, who had already grown somewhat tipsy.

The Captain's voice was deafening. Radeëv, shaking his head, was cautiously moving away, together with his chair, and was muttering:

"There's a bit of a correction needed here. . . ."

Spivak arrived, bent down toward his wife, and said:

"He's asleep. Fast asleep."

8

All these people did not in the least interest Clim, once more resurrecting in his memory a childhood impression of lobsters, brought by a drunken fisherman, crawling awkwardly across one another helter-skelter on the kitchen floor, their tails crackling. Apathetically listening to their speeches, declining from participation in their disputes, he was looking closely at Inokov. He did not like Inokov's having gone with Lidia to the country house

to invite Katin the writer; he did not like the way this coarse lad was so familiarly swinging in his chair between Lidia and Elizaveta Spivak, bending with his sly little smile now toward the one, now toward the other. At the beginning of the evening with the same sort of a little sneering smile Inokov had walked up to him and asked:

"Did they put you out of the University?"

The unexpectedness and the form of the question overwhelmed Clim; he stared at his questioner in mute astonishment.

"Were you rioting?" the other asked anew, and when Clim had told him that during this semester he had not studied, Inokov unceremoniously put a third question:

"Was it out of prudence that you didn't study?"

"What has prudence to do with this?" Clim inquired dryly.

"Why, preventing you from getting into any scrape," explained Inokov, turning his back upon him.

And a few minutes later he was telling Vera Petrovna, Lidia, and Elizaveta Spivak:

"Two months passed; he had returned from Paris, met me in the street, and calls me: 'Do come, my wife and I bought a remarkable thing!' I came, and was looking for a place to sit down, when he shoves toward me a light, strange-looking little chair upon the slenderest of gilded legs, with a seat of velvet: 'Sit down, please!' I refused, afraid lest I somehow break such an elegant thing — but no! 'Sit down!' he begs me. I sit down — and suddenly, from under me, music began to play — something very lively. I sit there, and feel that I've turned red, while he and his wife both look at me with happy eyes and laugh. They're as glad as children. I got up — the music fell silent. 'No,' I said, 'this isn't to my liking; I've become accustomed to hearing music with my ears.' They became offended."

This story which made Clim's mother and Elizaveta Spivak

laugh, compelled Lidia to smile a little, while Samghin reflected that Inokov was artfully playing the part of a simple-hearted fellow; in reality, he must be crafty and malicious. There he was, speaking, his cold eyes glittering:

"Yes, these people took a trip to the most magnificent city of Europe, found the most vulgar thing there, bought it, and are glad. But here," he handed Spivak a cigarette case—"Here is something made and presented to me by a certain tubercular carpenter—married, with four children."

The cigarette case aroused raptures. Clim also took it in his hands: it was made out of the *zhizoma* of a juniper tree; upon its lid the master workman had artfully carved out a little imp—the imp sat upon a tussock and with a slender young reed was teasing a crane.

"For two days, day and night, did he carve that," Inokov was saying, mopping his forehead and looking at everybody questioningly. "Here, between the little musical stool and this thing there's some connection which I can't grasp. There is, in general, a great deal which I don't grasp."

He smiled a broad smile, tossed his head and lit a cigarette—as for the burning match, he extinguished it by squeezing it between his fingers, and only then tossed it upon a tea-saucer.

"At first you look at things—and then they look at you. You look upon them with interest, while they look upon you demandingly: 'Guess what we're worth? Not in money, but spiritually.' I'm going to have a drink. . . ."

Samghin followed him. There was little room around the table and Varavka was orating with a glass of wine in one hand, while with the other he had put his beard on his shoulder and was holding it there.

"The disturbances of the students—these are an expression of an emotional opposition. In youth men seem talented to them-

selves, and this seemingness permits them to think that they are being governed by ungifted nonentities."

He sipped off a gulp of wine and continued, raising his voice:

"Since those in authority over us really are ungifted, the emotional opposition of our youth is very much justified thereby. We would be both more peaceful and more clever if the people at the head of the government were talented, as is the case in England. But we have no governmental talents. And so we raise up on our shields even such a person as Witte."

Elbowing the others aside unceremoniously Inokov made his way to the table, where, pouring out vodka for himself, he said in a low voice to Clim:

"Your stepfather is rather strongly put together. But who is that red-headed fellow?"

"A former teacher of mine—a philosopher."

"A blockhead, probably."

Samghin wanted to become angry, but seeing Inokov chewing his cheese as a ram chews grass, he decided that it would be useless.

"But where is Luba?" he asked.

"I don't know," answered Inokov indifferently. "It seems that she's in Kazan, taking the course in midwifery. I've parted with her, you see. She's forever concerned about the constitution, about the revolution. But I don't know yet if the revolution be necessary. . . ."

"What a brazen vulgarian," reflected Samghin, listening to the muffled, grumpy voice.

"If they want the revolution for the sake of a full belly, I'm opposed to it, inasmuch as, well filled, I'm viler than when I'm hungry."

Clim was conjecturing how he could confuse, expose this crafty vagabond, who was so dexterously playing the rôle of a simple-

hearted lad. But before he had a chance to think up anything Inokov said, striking him lightly on the shoulder:

"It would be interesting for me to know, Samghin, what you're thinking about when you assume that pike-like face?"

Clim frowned and moved away, while Inokov, buttering a piece of rye bread, went on meditatively:

"About a week ago I was sitting in the city park with a darling girl; it was already late, and quiet; the moon was rolling through the sky; the clouds were scudding along, the leaves were falling from the trees into the light and shadow on the ground; the maiden, a chum of my childhood days, a solitary prostitute, was yearning, complaining, repenting — in general, a romantic affair with all the details right. I'm consoling her: 'Drop it,' I was saying, 'Stop!' — The doors of repentance open easily, but what's the sense of all that? — Want to have a drink? Well, I'm going to have one."

Puckering up his left eye he drank, and thrust in his mouth a little bit of bread and butter — this did not hinder him from speaking.

"Suddenly — there you are, walking along with your pike-like face, just as now. 'Eh,' thinks I, 'Probably I'm not saying the proper thing to Aniuta, whereas this chap knows what ought to be said.' What would you have told this maiden, Samghin — eh?"

"Probably the very same thing that you told her," answered Clim amiably, feeling that he had lost the desire to expose the craftinesses of Inokov.

"The same thing?" Inokov repeated questioningly. "I don't believe that. No, you probably have something you're holding back — there must be something. . . ."

Clim smiled, surmising that in this case a smile would be more significant than words, while Inokov once more stretched

out his hand toward the bottle, but then gave up the idea with a gesture of apathy and went to where the ladies were sitting.

"A nympholept," reflected Clim, but by now with condescension.

As hitherto he frequently met Inokov on the streets, at the river front among the stevedores, or standing away from everybody. He would stand there, sunk into the sand up to his ankles, chewing a straw, nibbling it, spitting out the little pieces; or he would be smoking, and with his eyes reflectively puckered up, gazing upon the ant-like moiling of men. He was always dust-soiled, for some reason, while his broad rumpled hat made him resemble an undertaker's mute. Clim had seen him coming out of a *bierstube* side by side with Dronov; Dronov, giggling, was making rounded gestures with his right hand, as though he were tugging some unseen person by the hair, while Inokov had said:

"That's it precisely. Perhaps it merely seems to us that we're shuffling on one spot, whereas in reality we're climbing somewhere up a spiral."

In the street he spoke just as loudly and unceremoniously as in a room, and eyed the people he met point-blank, just like a man who has lost his direction and who looks for someone of whom to ask the way.

One could not understand: Why did Elizaveta Spivak always make Inokov stand out, why were Clim's mother and Varavka plainly well-inclined toward him, and why did Lidia converse with him by the hour in the garden, and smile upon him amicably? There, even now — she was smiling as she stood by the window in front of Inokov, who had perched himself on the window-sill, cigarette in hand.

"Yes, I must come to an understanding with her. . . ."

He did this on the following day; immediately after breakfast he went upstairs to her room and found her dressed to go out, in her top coat, small hat, and umbrella in hand — a fine drizzle was licking the window-panes.

"Where are you bound for?"

"To the governor's office, for a passport."

She smiled.

"Why do you look so surprised? I told you that Alena is calling me to Paris and that my father has let me go."

"That's not true," wrathfully contradicted Clim, feeling that his legs were trembling. "You haven't told me a word . . . this is the first I heard of it! What are you doing?" he asked her indignantly.

Lidia perched on a chair, throwing her umbrella on the divan; an absent-minded smile flitted over her swarthy, haggard face; in her eyes Clim beheld a sincere amazement.

"How strange!" she began quietly, looking in his face and blinking. "I felt certain that I'd told you . . . that I'd read you Alena's letter. . . . Are you sure you haven't forgotten?"

Clim shook his head in negation, while she got up, and pacing the room, said:

"Do you see, this is how it happened — I'm forever talking and disputing with you so much — even when I'm alone — that it seems to me that you know everything . . . that you understand everything."

"I'd have gone with you, too," muttered Clim, not believing her.

"And what of the university? It's time for you to be going to Moscow. . . . No — how strangely all this turned out in my case! I'm telling you — I felt certain. . . ."

"But then, when are we going to marry?" asked Clim angrily and without looking at her.

"Wha-at?" she asked, halting. "Why, must you . . . must we do it?" he caught her alarmed whisper.

She stood before him with her eyes wide open; her lips were quivering and her face was scarlet.

"Why marry? For I'm not pregnant. . . ."

Her words sounded strange, as though they had not been said by her. She went away, leaving him in the empty disordered room, in a silence which was almost undisturbed by the timid rustling of the rain. Lidia's sudden decision to go away, but especially her fright in answer to his proposal of marriage, discouraged Clim so much that he did not even become offended at once. And only after having sat for a minute or two in a state of depression did he snatch the spectacles off his nose, and plucking his moustache until it hurt fall to pacing the room, indignantly asking:

"Is this the end?"

He immediately reminded himself that even he himself had considered the possibility of breaking off this liaison.

"Yes, I did consider it! But only at those moments when she tortured me with her absurd questions. I considered it, but did not want it — I don't want to lose her."

Stopping before a mirror he exclaimed:

"And if there is any breaking-off, then the initiative must come from me, not from her."

He looked about him; it appeared to him that he had said these words aloud — very loudly. The chambermaid who was calmly wiping the table convinced him that he had been shouting mentally. In the mirror he saw his pale face — his myopic eyes were blinking in confusion. He hurriedly put on his eye-glasses, rushed off to his room and lay down, pressing his temples with his palms, biting his lips.

Half an hour later he had persuaded himself that he was especially insulted by the fact that he had been unable to make Lidia sob in rapture, or kiss his hands in gratitude or whisper tender words of wonder, as Nekhaeva had done. Not once, not for a minute, had Lidia granted him his sweet fill of the pride of the man who bestows happiness upon the woman. He would have felt easier over breaking off his liaison with her had he experienced this delight.

"Not a single sincere caress has she bestowed upon me," reflected Clim with indignation, recalling that Lidia's caresses had served only as material for a research in caresses.

"Nietzsche is right: One must approach a woman with a lash in one hand. And with a lollipop in the other, it should be added."

Growing calmer by degrees, he reflected that his liaison with her, which was disquieting even now, would later on have become unbearable, hateful. Probably Lidia, in her absurd seekings after something seemingly hidden behind the physiology of sex, would have begun to betray him.

"Makarov said that Don Juan was not a romantic, but a seeker of unknown, unexperienced sensations, and that many women were probably afflicted with the same passion for seeking after the unexperienced — George Sand, for instance," pondered Samghin. "Makarov, however, did not call this passion a disease, whereas Turoboev has styled it 'spiritual vampirism.' Makarov said that woman semiconsciously strives to explore a man to the last detail, in order to comprehend the source of his might over her, to comprehend wherewithal he had subdued her in antiquity."

Clim Samghin shut his eyes tight and reviled Makarov.

"An idiot. What can be more stupid than a romantic who studies gynaecology? How much more simple and natural is Kutuzov, who has so easily and quickly taken Marina away from Dmitri; Inokov, who spurned little Luba as soon as he perceived that he felt bored with her. . . ."

Samghin's thoughts were assuming a more and more militant character. He assiduously strove to make them keener, because behind these thoughts arose a dim consciousness of a most serious loss. And not only was it Lidia on whom he had staked and lost, and who was beyond retrieval, but something still more important for him. But he did not want to think about this, and as soon as he heard that Lidia had returned, he resolutely went off to ask her for an explanation. If she really did want to part now, then let her confess herself guilty of the breaking off, and beg forgiveness. . . .

Lidia was writing a letter, seated at a table in her little room. She silently glanced at Clim over her shoulder, and questioningly raised her very dense yet slender eye-brows.

"We ought to talk things over," said Clim, drawing his chair up to the table.

Putting her pen down, she raised her arms above her head, stretched herself, and asked:

"What about?"

"It's imperative," said Clim, trying to fix her eyes with a stern gaze.

Today she was especially like a gypsy, with her plentiful curly hair which she was never able to comb smoothly, her thin, dark face with its flashing eyes and long lashes which bent upward, her thin nose; her sinuous figure in a wine-coloured dress; her narrow shoulders enveloped in an orange shawl with blue flowers.

Before Samghin had a chance to find sufficiently weighty words for the opening of his speech, Lidia began, quietly and seriously:

"We have spoken so much. . . ."

"Pardon me! One cannot treat a man the way you have treated me," Samghin began impressively. "What is the meaning of this sudden decision to go to Paris?"

But she, without listening to him, continued in a tone that made her sound as if she were thirty years old.

"Besides that, I conversed with you even when I had gone away from you and was alone. I spoke honestly for you also . . . more honestly than you'd have spoken yourself — yes, believe me! For you, really, aren't very . . . brave. That's why you said that 'one must love in silence.' Whereas I want to speak, to shout — I want to understand. You advised me to read the *Handbook of Midwifery. . . .*"

"Don't be malicious," said Samghin.

Lidia smiled, asking him:

"Why, was it out of malice that you advised me to read the *Hygiene of Marriage?* But I haven't read this book — most probably it doesn't explain precisely why I'm necessary to you for your love? Is that a foolish question? I've others still more foolish than this one. Probably you're right: I am a degenerate, a decadent, and I'm unfit for a wholesome well-balanced man. It seemed to me that I'd find in you a man who'd help . . . however, I don't know what it was I expected from you."

She turned her head and looked out of the window at the clouds which were the colour of dirty ice, while Samghin said angrily:

"I too . . . thought that you'd be a good friend to me. . . ."

Pensively looking at him, she continued in a lower voice:

"Just see how all this sped . . . just as if a shaving had flared up . . . and now—it no longer is."

Her swarthy face had become darker; she averted her eyes from Clim's face, arose, and drew herself up.

Samghin also arose, expecting words which would hurt him.

"It's no joy to live without comprehending anything, in some sort of a mist, wherein, at rare intervals for a minute or so, some searing little flame may flare up."

"You know very little," said he with a sigh, his fingers drumming on the desk. No, one couldn't get offended at Lidia, one couldn't use any harsh words to her.

"And what is it one has to know?" she asked.

"One must study."

"Yes? To feel one's self a school-girl all life long?" she smiled, gazing through the window at the harlequin sky.

"It seems to me that everything I already know one doesn't have to know. But just the same, I'll make an effort to study," he heard her pensive words. "Not in Moscow, the bustling city, but perhaps in Peterburg. As for Paris, I really must go, because Alena is there. She's not at all happy, and you know how I love her. . . ."

"For what?" Samghin felt like asking, but the chambermaid entered and requested Lidia to come down to Varavka.

They went down the staircase side by side and in silence. Clim stood for a while in the entry, contemplating the different overcoats extended along the wall, upon the coat-rack—there was something about them reminiscent of a throng of beggars upon a church portal—headless beggars.

"No, this isn't the end—there is more to be said," he decided, and, having come to his own room, sat down to write a letter to Lidia. He wrote long, but having read through the sheets he had written decided that his epistle had been composed by two peo-

ple who were equally unlike him: one unsuccessfully and coarsely made fun of Lidia, while the other pitifully and clumsily justified himself in something.

"But I'm certainly not in the wrong," he assured himself indignantly. He tore up the letter and immediately decided that he would go off to Nizhni-Novgorod, to the All-Russian Exposition. He would leave unexpectedly, as Lidia was about to do — and go off before she would get ready to go abroad. This would make her understand that he was not grieving bitterly over the break-up. On the other hand — perhaps she would gather that he felt depressed, would change her decision, and go with him?

But when he told Lidia that he was going away the day after tomorrow, she remarked most apathetically:

"How fortunate that our affair has ended this way, quietly without any dramatic scenes. I was afraid there would be some before we were finished."

She drew him to her and kissed his lips hard.

"We part as friends? Then, when we meet anew, we'll both be more wise — yes? And, perhaps, we'll see each other with different eyes?"

Clim was greatly touched by her unexpected tender words and by the little tear-drops in the very corners of her eyes; he said, very softly, imploring her:

"Wouldn't it be better for you to go with me?"

"No," said she decisively. "No — no need of that! You'd interfere with me."

And she quickly dried her eyes. Fearing that he might say something inappropriate, Clim also quickly kissed her dry, warm hand. Later, pacing his room, he reflected:

"In reality she's unhappy — that's what it is. A barren flower. She is without a soul. Cerebrates but doesn't sensate."

He halted in the middle of the room, took off his eye-glasses, and twirling them, looking about him, thought almost aloud:

"But how quickly this play came to its curtain! Really, it's just as if some shavings had burned up."

He felt himself at a loss, but at the same time felt that for him had arrived days of rest, which he already stood in need of.

XX

1

SEVERAL days later Clim Samghin's train was pulling into Nizhni-Novgorod. Some three *versts* before the depot, the train, tightly packed with people, began rolling slowly as though the engineer wanted to afford the passengers a more leisurely inspection of the motley clustering of rather new, diversely fantastic buildings upon the dismal field, among yellow bald spots of sand and muddily green islands of turf.

Parallel with the rails, somewhat below the grading, blindingly shone in the sun the building of the Machinery Division—a building of metal and glass, in its form resembling an enormous trough, turned bottom up; through the glass divisions one could glimpse a horde of metallic monsters slowly moving inside the building, could glimpse the captive beasts of iron jostling one another. The single-storied Pavilion of Agriculture, adorned in wooden fretwork of that Russian style which had been conceived by Ropet the German, had bent itself into a semi-circle. There reared up, crushing one another, many more capriciously scattered buildings of unusual architecture; certain ones among them reminded one of the pleasant art of the pastry-cook; and just like a gigantic lump of sugar, there stood out of their motley throng the white, isolated building of the Art Division. A two-headed golden eagle glittered blindingly in the bright sun on the tip of the Czar's Pavilion, built on the style of those *teremi*—ancient Russian mansions—which are depicted in the illustrations of fairy-tales. While above the golden eagle, in the blueish

air swelled out the grey bladder of a balloon tethered by a long rope.

The leisurely movement of the train made this little city circle slowly; it seemed as if all its unusual structures were revolving about an invisible point, changing their places, screening one another, gliding between the gravel paths and the small squares. This impression of a confused round dance, of a listless but stupendous jostling, was strengthened by the toy-like little figures of people, cautiously pacing among the buildings over the sinuous paths; there were few people, and only a few rare individuals among them were hurriedly running in different directions, while the majority gave the idea that they were lost, and were searching for something. The people seemed less mobile than the buildings — the buildings now showed them, now hid them behind their corners.

This half-faery impression of a quiet but mighty round dance remained with Samghin for almost the entire duration of his stay in this strange city, builded on the edge of a barren melancholy field, which in the distance was blocked in by the blueish bristles of a pine forest, — "Savelov's Mane" — and beyond, the unseen Oka, by the "Diyatlovi (Woodpecker) Mountains," where, among the greenery of gardens the little houses and the churches of Nizhni-Novgorod were lurking.

2

Putting up at one of the wooden, hastily hammered together hostelries, in which everything creaked, crackled, and where in every sound one felt something convulsive, Samghin quickly washed himself, changed his clothes, drank a glass of lukewarm tea and immediately set out for the Exposition; it was no more than three hundred steps away.

He returned toward evening — dazzled, deafened, his sensations those of a traveller returning from a trip to a distant, unknown land. But this sensation of satiation did not oppress him, but somehow seemed to make Clim expand, insistently demanding formulation, and promising him the reward of a great joy which he already dimly felt.

It did not take form soon — but on one of the nasty days of a none too clement summer. Clim was lying in bed, muffling himself up with the thin blanket, with an overcoat on top of it. An angry rain was lashing the reverberating roofs; the thunder rumbled, shaking the hotel building; through the cracks of the windows whistled and snorted a wet wind. In three places heavy drops of water were falling at regular intervals from the ceiling to the floor — water exhaling an odour of varnish and swamp muck.

Clim Samghin saw that before him had unrolled an enormous, fantastically rich land, the existence of which he had not suspected; a land of the most diversified toil — Lo, she had gathered together the products of this toil, and, as though on her palm was proudly showing them to her own self. One might have thought that the handsome little buildings had been purposely built upon the dismal field, side by side with a poor and filthy district, whose hideously impersonal buildings were drearily scattered over the sand washed up by the Volga and the Oka, and whence a grey, prickly dust flew, on those dismal days when a hot "westerly" blew from down the Volga.

In this contiguity of the riches of the land and of the poverty of certain of her drab mannikins one seemed to see some boastful hidden hint:

"We live badly, but when it comes to work — look how well we do it!"

Not as showily and boastfully, but still more convincingly,

did the Fair shout about the riches of the land. Its squatty, monotonously yellow rows of stone-built shops, the wide maws of their doors gaping, showed in their cavernous murk piles of variously worked metals, mounds of linens, of calico, of woolen stuffs. Colourfully decorated porcelain glistened there, mirrors glittered, reflecting everything that moved past them; alongside the trader in church furniture, traffic in artfully cut glass was going on while opposite the enormous showcases holding it, closely covered with goblets and wine glasses, was the sheen of porcelain-ware intended for use in lavatories. In this association of the ecclesiastic with the domestic Clim Samghin benignly noted the wide-sweeping shamelessness of trafficking.

3

There were more people at the Fair than at the Exposition; they carried themselves more freely, more noisily, and all seemed joyous in their service to trade. One was struck by the diversity of types, the large number of foreigners, of men of other races, of warmly clad inhabitants of the East; the ear caught strange speech, the eye — unusual figures and faces. Among the Russians one not infrequently met gaunt fellows with huge beards, who unpleasantly recalled the deacon, and thereupon Samghin for a short space, lasting a few minutes, yet with alarm, recalled that there was a desire on the part of people who had but three fingers, of unfrocked deacons, of hysterical drunkards, of gay students — such as Marakuev — and of others, to make over, in their own fashion, such a mighty land as this. Poyarkov, whom Clim esteemed colourless, and the elegant, rather staid Preiss who would surely be a professor — these two did not alarm Clim. The self-assured Kutuzov, devotee of facts-and-figures, had faded in his memory — and besides, Clim did not like to think about him.

Looking at the wooden ceiling made of ship-deck timber, he watched the water running down the cracks and gathering into large, glassy globules, fall to the floor, forming pools.

There came to his memory the glitter of chill firearms from Zlatoust; the shields of knives, forks, scissors, and locks from Pavlov, Vacha, Vorsmar. In the Military-Naval Pavilion, ornamented with gun cartridges, swords and bayonets, had been placed on exhibition a long-throated cannon, neat and small, made in Motovilikha, glistering and cold, like a fish. A squat sailor, who seemed to be moulded out of bronze, stroking his blue chin, twirling his black mustachios upward, condescendingly and amusingly explained to the public:

"This here weapon is loaded from this here place, with this here charge, which you couldn't even heft, and fires in any given direction aimed at—meanin', of course, the enemy. Don't be shovin' in your little cane, mister—it ain't allowed!"

Cloth-of-gold shone like a field of rye on a July evening at the setting of the sun; lengths of glazed brocade reminded one of the blueish light of moonlit nights in winter; vari-coloured materials—the autumn pageantry of forests. These poetical comparisons came to Clim after he had visited the Division of Painting, where a "gentleman who had a habit of explaining things," lofty-browed, long-haired, and spare, with a loosely-jointed body, had, in rapturously discoursing to the public about the landscapes of Nesterov, of Levitan, described Russia as being of cloth-of-gold, of calico, and, finally, as:

"Miraculously embroidered over the velvet of its earth with vari-coloured silks, by the hand of the greatest of artists—the hand of God."

Clim had experienced the pride of the patriot when inspecting in the Pavilion of Middle Asia the coarse counterfeits by the Germans of the Russian cloth-of-gold, intended for Khiva and

Bokhara; of the vivid calicoes of the Morozovs, and the colourful porcelain of the Kuznetzovs.

Toys and machines, church bells and carriages, jewellers' handiwork and grand pianos; colourful morocco of Kazan — so caressing to the touch; mountains of sugar, enormous mounds of hempen ropes and tarred cables; a belfry built of stearine candles; furs of amazing beauty, dressed by Sorokoumovsky, and iron from the Ural; troughs of scented soap; excellently tanned hides; objects manufactured from bristles — before these mounds of incomputable riches gathered small groups of people, who, staring stolidly at the imposing products of their native land, dampened Clim's exalted mood by their silence.

On rare occasions he heard exclamations of rapture, but if these did come, it was most frequently of all from the lips of women before the showcases of the textile workers and utensil manufacturers, the perfumers, the jewellers, and the furriers. However, one might have thought that the majority of the people was stricken dumb by the plentitude of impressions. But at times it seemed to Clim that only the praises of the women had the ring of true joy, whereas in the judgment of the men there was an ill-conceived envy. He even reflected that perhaps Makarov was right: a woman understands better than a man that everything in the universe is meant for her.

4

His patriotic feeling was especially exalted whenever he met groups of men of other races, gathered at the festival of the nation which ruled over them — gathered together from the White Sea to the Caspian and the Black, and from Helsingfors to Vladivostock. Slowly paced the Khivians, the Bokharans, and the corpulent Sarts, whose stately movements seemed indolent to

those people who were ignorant of the fact that rapidity is a trait of the devil. Some enervated Persians, with henna tinted beards, were standing near a flower bed; a tall old man with an orange beard and purple nails, indicating the flowers with a long finger of his well-cared-for hand, in a measured voice, as though he were declaiming verses, was saying something to his retinue which respectfully surrounded him. A hideously large ring with a ruby sparkled on his finger, drawing to it the bewitched gaze of a thin little man in a black caracul cap cut on a bias. Without tearing away from the ruby his rather moist red eyes, this man moved his thick lips, and it seemed as if he were afraid that the stone would jump out of its heavy golden setting.

One frequently came upon Tartars from Kazan, benign of mien, and upon Tartars from Crimea, who resembled Roumanian musicians; Georgians and Armenians ran about noisily; glum, albinescent Finns, the builders of the tramway and of the funicular railways in the city, stalked about leisurely. Near the Pavilion of the Archangel Railroad, built on the style of the ancient churches of the Northern region by Savva Mamontov, a Mæcenas and the builder of this road, lived a family of snub-nosed Samoyeds, exhibiting to the public a sea-lion which made its home in a basin built next to this pavilion, and which, in moments of a benignly condescending mood, was thought to say:

"*Blagodariu, Savva!* (I thank thee, Savva!)"

In an *iurta* of hides some nine Kirghizi, the colour of cast-iron, were squatting upon their heels; seven of them, with great vigour, were blowing upon long trumpets of some wood impervious to music; one youth, with an unbelievably broad bridge to his nose, and with black eyes somewhere near his ears, beat deafeningly at a tambourine, while a mite of an ancient, as tiny as a toy, his face grown over with greenish moss, childishly

thumped with his hands on a kettle, drawn over with the skin of an ass. At times he would open wide his toothless mouth, which seemed stitched together with the hairs of his sparse moustache, and for two or three minutes yowl in a thin, throaty voice which cut the ears:

"Ie-e-y-y-io-eh-eh-o-y-y-y . . ."

Shepherd players on the horn from Vladimir, with the ascetic faces of saints and the eyes of birds of prey, played Russian songs superbly upon their horns; while upon another platform, opposite the Military-Naval pavilion, Glavach, a black-bearded Adonis, conducting his orchestra of stringed instruments, played a strange piece, which was called in the program *The Music of the Heavenly Spheres.* This piece Glavach played three times or so a day; the public was very fond of it, and persons of an inquisitive turn of mind ran into the pavilion opposite and put their ears to the muzzle of the long cannon hoping to hear the soft music resound in its steel throat.

"A remarkable acoustic phenomenon," some very amiable and effeminate chap with beautiful eyes imparted to Clim. Samghin did not believe that the cannon could respond to *The Music of the Heavenly Spheres,* but being in a benign mood was tempted and went to listen to the cannon. Having heard nothing in its cold opening he felt himself very foolish, and decided not to yield to the voice of the people, which was praising Orina Phedosova, a narrator of the ancient sagas of the Northern region.

5

Every day, at the hour of the evening service in the churches, an elderly man, in sleeveless overcoat and warm cap, would walk up to the wooden crossbeams upon which hung the church bells of Okoshnikov and other makers. Baring his bald skull,

which resembled a cantaloupe in shape, he made the sign of the cross three times, looking at the sky with ferociously widened eyes; his eyes were white and vacant, like those of a blind man. After that he would make a waist-deep bow to the spectators and the auditors, who had been awaiting him, climb up on a crossbeam, and set the five *poud* tongue of a large church bell to swinging. Solemnly the softly booming succulent sighs of the sensitive copper would float away; it seemed that the iron black tongue had become animated, and by its own self with its own strength, was swinging the copper, avidly licking it, whereas the bell-ringer was unsuccessfully striving to catch it with his long hands, could not, and, in despair, was striking his own bald skull against the edge of the church bell.

He would, finally, succeed in stopping the full swing of the tongue; thereupon he would pass over to another crossbeam, to the little church bells, and there he would begin convulsively to jerk with his arms and legs, ringing out *Glory, Glory to our Russian Czar.* The bell-ringer jerked so that it seemed he was hanging in a noose of invisible rope, that he wanted to free himself from it, tossing his head, while his gaunt, lantern-jawed face was swelling up, becoming gorged with blood; yet the farther he went the more sonorously did the obedient copper of the bells glorify the Czar. Having done with his ringing, he would mop his perspiring skull and his wet face with a large handkerchief checked in blue and white, would again look up at the sky with his awesome white eyes, make a bow to the public, and go away making no response to the acclamations, to the questions. It was said that he had been stricken down by some grief, and that he had taken the vow of silence to the end of his days.

Clim Samghin had seen the bell-ringer several times, and suddenly remarked that the bell-ringer resembled the deacon.

From that minute on he began to think that the bell-ringer had committed some crime, and that now he was repenting in silence. Clim felt a desire to see the deacon in the place of the bell-ringer.

But, in general, Samghin lived in a state of quiet emotion before the plenitude and variety of things good, created by the hands of these diversely simple little mannikins, who without hurrying, were traversing the paths strewn with clean sand, modestly inspecting the products of their labours, praising in a low voice that which they saw, but, for the most part, preserving a pensive silence. And Samghin began to feel himself guilty of something before these quiet unassuming workmen; he gazed upon them amicably, even with a shade of respect for their outward insignificance behind which was hid a faery all-creative power.

"Here's your university!" he reflected, weighing his impressions. "A full knowledge of Russia — there's your chiefest, living learning!"

He was very much annoyed by Inokov, whose incongruous figure in a broad, wide-skirted jacket, in the hat of an undertaker's mute, drew one's attention to him from afar, as it flitted everywhere, just like a fantastic and hungry bird in search of food. Inokov had grown manlier; his cheeks were becoming grown over with tiny circlets of dark hair — this somewhat softened his rather coarse blotchy face with its wide cheek-bones.

Clim could not find the resolution to forego these meetings with Inokov, because this lad, so little to his liking, did know a great deal, just as his brother, Dmitri did, and could speak sensibly on the peasant arts and crafts, on fishing and fisheries, on the chemical industry, on steamship transportation. This was useful to Samghin, but Inokov's speeches always lowered his benign and pleasantly emotional mood somewhat.

"There is about all these charms something . . . widow-like," Inokov was saying. "You know: an elderly and seemingly not

a very clever widow, of dubious beauty, is boasting of her dowry, intent upon tempting a man to marriage . . ."

As though solving an intricate problem he would bite his lips; his mouth would be drawn out in a straight line.

Then he would curse grumblingly:

"The awkward devils! They got the idea of building an exposition of their treasures upon sand and swamps. On one side — the Exposition; on the other — the Fair, while in the middle you have the most gay village of Kupavino, where out of the three houses two are chock full of beggars and river-thieves, and one — with public wenches."

When Samghin went off into raptures over the development of the textile industry, Inokov would point out that the village was dressing ever more poorly, both as to the quality and the colours of the cloth, that the cotton was brought from Middle Asia into Moscow, in order that, after converting it into goods, it might be sent back into Middle Asia again. He pointed out that, despite the abundance of forests in Russia, paper is bought in its millions of *pouds* in Finland.

"There is as much cedar wood in the Ural as you could possibly want, and of graphite also, and yet we don't know how to make pencils."

It was still more unpleasant to hear Inokov's stories of some unsuccessful invention or other:

"Were you in the Agricultural Division?" he would ask, twisting his lips in a sneer. "There a certain Russian genius has put on exhibition a velocipede — precisely such as the Englishman, as far back as the eighteenth century, tried to ride; while another ass has cooked up a piano; he did everything himself — the keyboard, the strings — two thirds of the strings, of course, are of guts. Its notes rumble like an old cart over cobbles. Some ex-notary is the exponent of a swatter, intended to sock horseflies;

this swatter is fastened to the forward hub of a cart and slaps the horse — well, naturally the horse becomes frenzied. Fools ought to be hid in the depths of a thick forest, but we show them off for the benefit of all the nations."

Samghin every day breakfasted with him in a Swedish cardboard house at the entrance to the Exposition; Inokov modestly nourished himself with a piece of ham, ate much bread, drained a bottle of black beer, and occasionally stroking his face with his palm just as though he were rubbing the freckles off it, would say:

"The panels of a certain Vrubel, an artist, evidently of great power, they refuse to accept for the Exposition. I don't understand anything in art — but I can understand power anywhere. Savva Mamontov has built for Vrubel a separate little barn outside the boundaries of the Exposition — over there. Do you see it? Entrance to the public is gratis, yet it visits the little barn but poorly, even on those days when Mamontov's operatic choir sings there. I frequently sit there and look: on one wall is the *Princess Dream* and on the other, *Mikula Seliyaninovich and the Volga.*[53] Very strange. One newspaper chap looked through his fist at the *Dream,* at *Mikula,* and said:

"'Politics. *Alliance Franco-Russe.* I'm out of sympathy with that. Art must be free from politics.'"

Inokov unwillingly smiled, but immediately wiped the smile off his lips with his hand. He was constantly imparting different bits of news to Clim:

"Witte has arrived. Yesterday he was walking with the engineer Kazi, and citing Quintillian: ''Tis easier to do more than just so much.' A self-contented person. They're importing workmen to meet the Czar. Probably those hereabouts don't suffice, or else they place no trust in them. However, they're

recruiting some in Sormov, and in Nizhni, at the factory of Dobrov-Nabholtz."

"What's your attitude toward the Czar?" asked Clim.

Inokov glanced at him in wonder.

"I've never given that a thought."

6

Clim Samghin awaited the Czar with uneasiness, which even abashed him, but which he could not conceal from himself. He felt that it was imperative for him to see the man who embodied in himself the head of enormous, rich Russia, a country populated with some sort of a slippery people, of whom it was difficult to say anything definite — difficult for the reason that among these people were scattered far and wide another sort of mischievous folk. There was in Samghin a dim hope that, at the moment he looked upon the Czar, everything that he, Clim, had lived through, had thought over, would receive a definitive consummation. It was possible that this meeting would have the significance of that first sun-beam with which day begins — or of that last beam, after which the earth is gently embraced by the warm night of summer. Perhaps Diomidov was right: the young Czar was an extraordinary man — not such as his grandfather had been. He, who had so daringly destroyed the expectations of those who would limit his power, might perhaps be possessed of a character more resolute than the character of his grandfather. Yes, it was possible that Nicholas the Second was capable of standing alone against everybody, and that his youthful hand was strong enough to grasp the cudgel of Peter the Great, and his voice to shout at the people:

"What makes you carry on so?"

For two days or so Inokov diverted him from these thoughts.

"You don't want to hear Orina Phedosova?" he asked in amazement. "Why, she's a marvel."

"I'm no amateur of miracles," said Samghin, recalling the cannon and *The Music of the Heavenly Spheres.*

But Inokov, brandishing his arm, was saying in animation: "Contrasted with her, all this is rubbish!"

And, seizing Clim by the sleeve of his jacket, he continued: "Remember the 'Mothers' in the second part of *Faust?* But there they say something delirious, whereas this woman . . . Come on, do!"

Clim for the first time beheld Inokov in such a mood, and becoming interested by this fact, went with him into a hall where lectures and reports were delivered, and where Glavach played excellently on the organ.

"She's a marvel—you'll see," repeated Inokov.

A large bearded fellow walked out on the platform, in a long coat which seemed to have been riveted together out of sheet metal. In a reverberating voice he began speaking, as people speak who show trained monkeys and seals.

"I," he was saying; "I-I-I," he kept on repeating, with ever greater frequency, making with his hands the motions of a swimmer. "I've written the Foreword. The book is for sale at the entrance. She's illiterate. She knows by memory about three thousand verses . . . I . . . More than there are in the *Iliad.* Professor Zhdanov . . . when I, Professor Barsov . . ."

"That's nothing," said Inokov reassuringly. "This fellow is always stupid."

7

Taking tiny steps, swaying, a lop-sided little crone walked out on the platform, clad in dark calico, her head tied with a gay, much worn kerchief; a funny kindly little witch, moulded

out of wrinkles and creases, with the round face of a rag-doll and with smiling, childish eyes.

Clim glanced at Inokov angrily, certain that anew, as before the cannon, he would be obliged to feel himself a fool. But Inokov's face was lit up with a tipsy joyousness; he frenziedly clapped his hands and muttered:

"Ah, thou darling . . ."

This was funny. Samghin was somewhat softened, and having decided to endure anything at all for the duration of ten minutes, he, having taken out his watch, bent his head and immediately jerked it up: from the platform began to flow an unusually sonorous voice; there came the sound of weighty, ancient words. The voice was that of a country wife, but one would never think that the verses were being recited by an old woman. Aside from the honest beauty of her words, there was in this voice something superhumanly kindly and sage, a magic force which rooted Samghin to the spot, with the watch still in his hand. He wanted very much to turn around and look, to see the expressions of the people listening to the lop-sided little crone. But he could not tear his eyes away from the play of the wrinkles on the creased, kindly face, from the amazing glitter of the childish eyes which eloquently rounding out every line of the verses, lent to the ancient words a living effulgence and an enchanting, soft ring.

Monotonously waving her seamy little hand — altogether she resembled a carelessly stitched-together rag-doll — the old woman from the Olonetzky region was relating how the mother of the mighty giant Dobrynya (Good Fellow) bade him farewell, sending him upon the field of battle, upon his Gargantuan exploits. Samghin saw this huge mother, heard her firm words, behind which, nevertheless, one could catch both fear and sadness; he saw the broad-shouldered Dobrynya kneeling and hold-

ing his sword out upon his outstretched hands, looking with submissive eyes into the face of his mother.

At moments it seemed to Clim that he was alone in the hall, that there was never another soul there — that, perhaps, even this good witch was not there — but that, through the slight noise beyond the limits of the hall, out of the ages mankind had lived through, there was reaching him, truly miraculously, the resuscitated voice of heroic antiquity.

"Well, what do you think?" Inokov asked triumphantly; his face, expanded in a joyous smile, had become like that of a drunkard; his eyes were moist.

"It's amazing," answered Clim.

"Oh, this is nothing to what's coming! Mark you: she's no actress — she doesn't *play* for people but plays *with* people."

These strange words Clim did not comprehend, but he recalled them when Phedosova began spinning the tale of the quarrel between the *mouzhik* of Riyazan, Iliya Murometz, and Vladimir, Grand Prince of Kiev. Samghin once more beheld, bewitched, the sorceress's face — eloquent in its every wrinkle, caressed by the soft glitter of her inextinguishable eyes. With his intellect he comprehended that, after all, the solid-fleshed giant from the village of Karacharov, being angered by the pampered Grand Prince, did not speak thus, nor in such a voice; and, of course, in those keen eyes of his, the eyes of the *steppe,* there could not be such a sharp ironic little sneer — which distantly reminded him of the rather crafty and sage little sparks in the eyes of the historian Vasilii Kluchevski.

But, recalling the pitiless scholar, Samghin suddenly, and by now not with his intellect but with all his being, agreed that precisely this badly sewn calico doll was verily the most authentic history of the truth of good and the truth of evil, who both must and could speak about the past in the manner

in which this lop-sided old woman of Olonetzky spun her tale, speaking with equal love and wisdom about wrath and about tenderness, about the inconsolable sorrows of the mothers and the gigantean dreams of the children — about everything which constitutes life. And perhaps caressing men just as canorously, with a voice equally enchanting — whether speaking of truth or of invention — would history tell, some time, of how a certain man, one Clim Samghin, had lived on earth.

Following this, Samghin felt that never yet had he been as good, as wise, and as unhappy — almost to the verge of tears, as in this strange hour, among the rows of people, cast under a spell — yea, unto muteness — by this old, dear witch, who had stepped out of the ancient fairy-tales into this actuality, boastfully built in haste and for show.

But for Inokov, Clim would have been transported farther from reality than ever before. In the short intermissions between the tales of Phedosova, when she rested, licking her dark lips with the tip of her tongue, occasionally stroking her crooked side, twitching the ends of her little head kerchief, tied under a chin which resembled the cap of a mushroom — when she, rocking sideways, smiled and nodded her head to the people shouting in rapture — during these minutes Inokov broke Clim's mood, frenziedly clapping his palms and shouting in a sobbing voice:

"Tha-anks! Grandma, darling — tha-anks!"

He was as stirred up as a drunkard; he jumped up in his chair, he deafeningly blew his nose, he stamped his feet; his wing-like cape had crept off his shoulders, and he was trampling it.

The remainder of the day Clim passed in a state of estrangement from actuality; his memory persistently prompted to him the ancient words and verses; before his eyes swayed the doll-like figure, waved the soft, seamy hand, played the wrinkles upon the kindly and clever face, smiled the grey, most radiant eyes.

8

But three days later, in the morning, he was at the Fair, standing in a crowd surrounding a belfry upon which was being raised a flag, opening the All-Russian trade mart. Inokov said that he would try to get him through into the Exposition at the hour when the Czar would be there — however, this would hardly succeed; but that most probably the Czar would visit the Main Building of the Fair, and that it would be easier to get a peep of him there.

Opposite Samghin, to the right and left of him, in gay, endless lines, stood stalwart, well-grown, not at all badly dressed people; some in new sleeveless jackets and in long peasant overcoats, though the majority of them wore jackets. Here and there sharply stood out the red spots of calico blouses; broad trousers of drugget showed a sheen in the sun; the facings of brightly polished boots glittered. Clim, for the first time, saw so near at hand and in such a mass the people, about whom, ever since his childhood, he had heard so many disputes and had read so many scores of sad narratives dealing with their hard life. He scrutinized the hundreds of shaggy, smoothly combed, and bald, heads; the snub-nosed, bearded, healthy faces, — so staid, with goodly eyes — gentle and stern, kindly and intelligent. These people stood peaceably, close to one another, and their broad chests blended into a single chest. It was clear that this was that very same great Russian people, whose hands had created the countless riches handsomely strewn over there upon that dismal field. Yes — it was precisely the people who had winnowed out and placed its best people to the front, and it was a good thing that all the other folk, festally arrayed but smaller of stature, not as presentable, had submissively taken their places behind the backs of the men of toil, yielding them the first

place. The more closely Clim scrutinized the people in the first rank, the higher rose the pleasantly exciting respect toward them. It was perfectly impossible to imagine that such simple, modest folk, calmly certain of their power, could follow after the gay students, and after certain half-mad, vainglorious men.

These modest folk were modest to such a degree that it had been found necessary to push out, to drag forward, certain ones among them — which was being done by a mighty, mustachioed police official in golden spectacles, and by some spry, slender-legged fellow in a straw hat, with a tri-coloured ribbon. These, slowly pacing along the human wall, genially shouted now at one, now at another:

"Step forward a little, baldy!"

"What you hiding for, big fellow? Take your place here."

"You with the ear-ring — come here!"

The spry chap, after one glance at Clim, touched his shoulder with a glove.

"Back up a little, young man!"

The lad with the silver ring in his ear, lightly, with the battering ram of his shoulder, shoved Samghin in back of him, and said in a low voice, hoarsely:

"In eye-glasses you'll see even from here."

But, from behind his broad back, one could not see anything.

Samghin made an attempt to stand between him and the bald-headed, bearded fellow, but the broad-backed lad, thrusting out an insuperable elbow, asked:

"Where you goin'?"

And he advised him:

"Stand in your place!"

Clim submitted.

"Yes," he reflected. "This fellow can put anybody in his place."

And he asked:

"Where are you from?"

The fellow with the ring in his ear turned his resilient neck, and inclined his red face with its black moustaches.

"From the second precinct," said he.

"A workman?"

"A fireman — in an axe-company."

Samghin was silent for a while, pondered, and asked once more:

"Why aren't you in your uniform?"

The fellow with the ear-ring made no answer. Instead of him his neighbour — a well-built Adonis in a blouse of yellow silk — began loquaciously:

"Nobody's goin' for to show off with no workmen, no master artisans. This here Exposition ain't for their kind. If the artisan ain't at his work, then he's drunk — and there ain't no use of showing drunken fellows to the Czar."

"Right you are," said someone loudly. "Our indecent carryings-on hold no interest for him."

The bald-headed giant angrily put in his oar:

"One's got to know how to tell people apart; there's workmen *and* workmen — artisans *and* artisans. I, now, am a workman of Vukola Morozov's — there's ninety of us fellows here. And then, there are some from the Nikolskaya manufactory."

A leisurely conversation sprang up, and soon Clim learned that the fellow in the yellow blouse was a dancer and singer from the choir of Snitkin, much beloved on the Volga; while the dancer's neighbour was a bear-hunter, a ranger from the Udelnyii forests — black bearded, thick-set, with the round eyes of an owl.

Feeling that the conversation of these casual people was oppressing him, Samghin felt a desire to change his place and,

sidling, slipped forward between the fireman and the dancer. But the fireman with a heavy hand seized him by the shoulder, thrust him back, and said respectfully:

"You mustn't go a-strollin'—see, everybody's standin' still?"

The dancer, glancing at Clim with a smile, explained:

"Today no attention is being shown to the public."

"Listen—he's comin'."

Somebody's commanding voice cried out:

"Treskin! Don't let anybody dare crawl over the roofs!"

All fell silent, drawing themselves up a bit, listening, looking at the Oka, at the dark streak of the bridge, where two lines of people, toy-like in the distance, brandished their thin arms and seemed to tear their heads off their shoulders, to play with them, throwing them upward. One could hear the pealing of church bells; with especial impressiveness did the bell of the Kremlin Cathedral boom, and together with the brazen din there grew, rolling ever nearer, another noise—a growling noise. Clim had heard how Moscow, when it had met the Czar, had roared its hurrahs, but at that time the roar had not agitated him, humiliatingly driven into a courtyard together with an intoxicated fellow and a pickpocket. But to-day he felt that agitation was even making him sway, and making everything dark before his eyes.

One might have thought that this mighty roar was drawing after it a detachment of rapidly galloping policemen; the clacking of hoofs upon cobbles did not drown out, but intensified the roar. The division was dexterously dividing—after every ten or twenty paces a horseman pranced out of it, and putting his horse sideways to the people, wedged them up on the sidewalk, shoved them behind the belfry toward that bank of the Oka which was devoid of buildings.

Out of the solid wall of people on the other side of the street,

from behind the fat croup of a horse, ponderously crawled out the bell-ringer from the Exposition and in three steps reached the middle of the paved way. Two people immediately ran up to him, calling out:

"Where you goin', devil? Where you goin', funny face?"

But the bell-ringer, thrusting the people away with his hand, raised up to heaven his ferocious eyes, and swinging wide his right hand thrice made the sign of the cross over the road.

"Oho, so that's what you're up to!" condescendingly exclaimed a weaver.

The bell-ringer was hurriedly stuffed into the crowd, while his warm cap remained on the cobbles of the paved way.

It appeared to Samghin that the air was darker, compressed by the mighty ululation of thousands of people—an ululation which was drawing nearer, like a cloud invisible to the naked eye, obliterating all sounds, having swallowed up the pealing of the bells and the yelps of the brazen tubas of the military orchestra on the square near the Main Buildings. When this howling and roaring rolled down upon Clim it deafened him, it raised him upward and compelled him to shout also, with all the strength of his lungs:

"Hurrah!"

The people were leaping, brandishing their arms, throwing their caps and hats into the air. They shouted so that one could not hear at all how Governor Baranov's spirited pair beat its hoofs upon the cobbled way. The governor stood up in his carriage, with one knee placed on its seat, looking backward, waving his cap; he was of a steely hue, desperate and heroic; the golden bosses of his orders flashed upon his bulging chest.

Behind him, at a certain distance, at a trot, dashed along a *troika* of white horses. White sparks flew from its silver harness. The horses stamped noiselessly; the broad carriage rolled on in-

audibly; it was strange to see the horses shifting their twelve legs, inasmuch as it seemed that the Czar's carriage was gliding upon air, torn away from the earth by the mighty shout of rapture.

Clim Samghin felt that, for one certain moment, everything around him and he himself as well, had become torn away from the earth and was flying through the air in a whirlwind of elemental roaring.

The Czar — a little bit of a fellow, smaller than the governor, of a blueish-grey tint — was softly bobbing up and down on the edge of the carriage seat; he had propped himself up with one hand against his knee; the other he kept lifting mechanically up to his cap, nodding evenly to the right and to the left, and smiling, looking into the countless, roundly gaping large toothed mouths, and upon faces red from exertion. He was very young — a very clean little fellow, with a handsome soft face, while his smile was apologetic.

Yes, his fixed, unchanging smile was undeniably apologetic — the soft smile of Diomidov. And his eyes were of the same sort, sapphire-hued; and if one were to shave off his light little beard he would become exactly the same as Diomidov.

He flew past, followed by the thousand-headed roar — and was met by the same sort of roar. Certain other carriages also dashed by; there was a flashing of uniforms and of orders; but one could already hear that the horses were beating with their hoofs, that the wheels were rolling over stone, and that all things in general had come down to earth.

The bell-ringer again rose up on the road; with ponderous swings of his arm he was making the sign of the cross in the air after the carriages; the people went around him as though he were a pillar. A red-faced fellow in a grey jacket bent down, picked up the cap, and handed it to the bell-ringer. Thereupon

the bell-ringer, striking it against his knee, with broad steps began walking in the middle of the cobbled roadway.

Clim's eyes, having avidly swallowed up the Czar, still beheld his blueishly grey figure, and upon his handsome little face, his guilty smile. Clim felt that this smile had deprived him, Samghin, of hope, and had made him sad unto tears. Tears had appeared in his eyes before, but those had been tears of that joy which had seized and raised all these people above the earth. But now, in the wake of the Czar and the shout dying away in the distance, Clim was weeping with tears of sadness and of affront.

It was impossible to reconcile one's self to the fact that the Czar resembled Diomidov; the guilty smile of confusion on the face of the sovereign of a hundred millioned nation was inconceivable. And it passed one's understanding in what way this young, handsome, and soft little fellow could have evoked such a shattering roar.

9

Without any will, and cast down, Samghin moved through the throng of people who had for some reason become suddenly and noisily gay; he heard their animated voices:

"In the olden times people would have gotten down on their knees . . ."

"Hey, our gang—c'mon, let's have some beer!"

"Roman—how much did them boots stand you?"

Nobody said anything about the Czar! Samghin caught only a single phrase:

"He'll find it a difficult matter to get along with us."

This was said by a thick-set lad, probably a cloth dyer. His hands were tinted with a deep blue dye. He walked along, leading by the arm a neat little ancient, impudently elbowing the people apart and shouting at them:

"Get a move on!"

But even this fellow, it was possible, may not have been speaking of the Czar.

"But what if these people also feel themselves deceived, and are merely artfully concealing it?" reflected Clim.

A sharp-eyed fellow glanced into his face and unbelievingly asked:

"But why are you crying, young sir? What reason have you to cry to-day?"

Samghin dried his eyes in confusion, quickened his step, and turned aside in one of the streets of the Kunavin suburb, filled from one end to the other with houses of ill fame. In almost every window, alternating with the tri-coloured stripes of flags, were posed half-dressed women, showing their bare shoulders, their breasts, cynically calling to one another from window to window. And with the exception of the flags everything in the street had an everyday air as if nothing at all had happened, as if the Czar and the rapture of the people were but a dream.

"No, Diomidov was mistaken," reflected Clim, having hired a cabby to take him to the Exposition. "This Czar will hardly find the resolution to cry out as the hunch-backed little girl cried out."

At the entrance to the Exposition he was met by Inokov.

"We can go through!" he said hurriedly. "It's a pity you're late."

Inokov had taken a haircut, had shaved his cheeks, and, having replaced his winged cape with a cheap little suit, of mouse colour, had lost his absurdly eccentric appearance. Save that the freckles upon his face had come out still more clearly, he was in everything else practically indistinguishable in any way from all the other, somewhat monotonously decent people. There were not many of them—at the Exposition they were very

much interested in the architecture of the buildings, looking at the roofs, peeping in at the windows, peering behind the corners of pavilions and pleasantly smiling to one another.

"Guards?" Clim asked in a whisper.

"Probably not all of them," Inokov answered angrily and with a loudness which was out of place; he walked along holding his hat in his hand, and looking at the ground with a frown.

"The burletta has already been given here," he was saying. "At the entrance to the Czar's Pavilion the sovereign was met by some *gridni*—you know, such comely-visaged Russian youths in white robes broidered with silver, in tall white hats, with double axes in their hands; it's said that they're the invention of that ancient litterateur, Dmitrii Grigorovich. They were standing in two rows; the Czar asks one of them: 'Your name?' 'Nakholtz.' He asks another: 'Elukhen.' He approaches a third: 'Ditmar.' A fourth one turned out to be Schultze. The Czar smiled, passed several in silence; he sees that a certain snub-nosed mug has set his eyes upon him with adoration; he smiled to the mug: 'And your name?' And the mug ups and barks at him in a bass: 'Antor!' It was with this contraction that this mug signed his tavern scores, whereas his real name and family name are Andrei Torsouev."

Inokov had related all this apathetically and pensively.

"Is this true?" asked Clim mistrustfully.

"Why, of course. If only it's stupid, it's surely the truth."

Clim fell silent, recalling the fireman and the dancer, whom he had taken for workmen.

10

The respectable people had suddenly become rooted to the spot, doffing their hats. Out of the Pavilion of Chemical In-

dustries came the Czar, in the company of three ministers: Vorontzov-Dashkov, Vannovsky, and Witte. The Czar was walking slowly, toying with his glove and listening to what the Court Minister was saying to him, as the latter lightly plucked at his sleeve and pointed to the Liquors Pavilion — a low knoll, covered with turf. At a distance, and upon the ground, the Czar appeared to Clim still smaller than he had been in the carriage. He evidently did not want to descend into the pavilion Vorontzov had indicated; turning his face aside and smiling disconcertedly, he was saying something to the Minister of War, who was clad in civilian dress and bore a little cane in his hand.

The four stood close together, the broad-shouldered Witte looking down on the others from the height of his ponderous body; his small head with its almost imperceptible nose and its thick barbarous beard appeared neckless, as if it had been jammed down hastily into his huge shoulders. He was gazing at the Czar who was small compared with him, and upon the ministers who were just as small, his lips sticking out in preoccupation, his eyes hid under the tussocks of his eyebrows — he was looking alternately at them and at his gold watch, lying open in his hand. Samghin's eyes were struck by the close and firm way in which the long and broad soles of Witte's heavy feet were pressed against the ground.

A few paces away from this group had respectfully halted the dashing, rather spare and prickly Governor Baranov, and the grey-bearded commissary of the Division of Arts and Crafts, Grigorovich, who was making broad circles in the air with his hand, and wiggling his fingers as though he were salting the earth, or sowing something. In a close, mute group stood the commissaries of the different divisions; certain people of substantial appearance with orders; and a big man with the face of

a far from crafty *mouzhik,* clad in a long *kaftan* embroidered with gold.

"Nikolai Bugrov—a millionaire," said Inokov. "They call him the Grand Duke of Nizhni-Novgorod.—And that's Savva Mamontov."

Out of the Pavilion of the Northern Region was rapidly walking a corpulent baldish little man with a small white beard and a merry, rosy face—he walked along and, laughing, was waving away a "gentleman who had a habit of explaining things—lofty of brow and long of hair.

"Trifles, my dearest fellow—the veriest trifles," said he loudly, making Governor Baranov look sternly in his direction. All the respectable people also turned their attention upon him. The Czar, too, gave him a look, with the same guilty smile, while Vorontzov Dashkov still persisted in twitching him by the sleeve, arousing Clim's indignation.

"An Adashev," he recalled, and wished this minister the fate of the preceptor of Ivan the Terrible.[54]

It was quiet and boresome at the Exposition, as if upon an inclement weekday. In an everyday fashion did the locomotives whistle in the train-yard; the rails screeched at the crossings; the buffers bumped, and the horns of the switchmen sang dismally.

The day, which had been bright since morning, had also turned pensive; greyish tenuous clouds had veiled the sky over in an even layer; the sun, covered by them, had become dully white in winter fashion, and its dispersed light fatigued the eyes. The gayness of the buildings had wilted; immovably and as if drained of their colours the countless flags drooped. The respectable people paced about languidly, while the blueish, modest figure of the Czar, having turned darker, had become still less noticeable against the background of the big, substantial people

clad in black, and in uniforms broidered with gold and decorated with the bosses of their orders.

The Czar was slowly walking toward the Military-Naval Division, at the head of these people who, it seemed, were shoving him on. There — Governor Baranov has bent down nimbly, lifted something from the ground from under the feet of the Czar, and cast it to one side.

"Well, have you had enough?" asked Inokov.

Samghin nodded his head in silence. He felt himself physically tired, he wanted to eat and he felt very sad. Such sadness had he experienced in his childhood when he had been given from the Christmas tree some other thing than the one he had set his heart on possessing.

"Do you know whom the Czar resembles?" asked Inokov.

Without saying anything Clim glanced at his face, expecting some rudeness, but Inokov said pensively:

"He resembles Balsaminov, dressed up as an officer."

"Isaac," muttered Samghin.

"What?"

"Isaac," repeated Clim, more loudly and with vexation, which he was not able to restrain.

"Ah, yes — that's from the Bible," recalled Inokov. "Well now, and who's Abraham, if that's the case?"

"I don't know."

"A strange comparison," smiled Inokov and began, after a sigh:

"They won't print my correspondence. The editor, the old Marino ram, writes to me that I lay too much stress upon the negative side and that this isn't to the censor's taste. He instructs me: every criticism must derive from a certain general idea and find therein a point of support. But the devil alone can find such a general idea."

Clim had ceased listening to his grumbling speech, thinking about the young man clad in blueish-grey uniform, about his confused smile. What would this man have said if Kutuzov, the Deacon, Liutov were to be put in front of him? Yes — how forceful could he make the words he would put to these people? And Samghin recalled — not mockingly as he always recalled it — but with bitterness:

"But was there really a boy? Perhaps there wasn't any boy at all!"

But, overladen with impressions he seemed, in general, to have unlearned how to think: the little spider that weaves the cobweb of thought had fallen very quiet. He felt a desire to go home, to the country house, for a rest.

II

But to go away was impossible. Varavka through a telegram had requested him to await his arrival.

And, while expecting Varavka, Clim Samghin beheld the Master of the House.

He was a man of middle height, clad in wide, long garments, of that elusive tint which leaves assume in late autumn, when they have already experienced the searing of the frost. These garments, as light as shadows, covered the dried bony body of the old man whose face had two tints — through the dull-yellow facial skin came out the brown spots of some ancient rust. This stony face was made longer by a little gray beard. One could easily have counted its hairs; little bushes of just such greyish hair were stuck at the corners of his mouth, growing downward; his lower lip, also of the colour of rust, hung away squeamishly, while above it was an uneven row of teeth as yellow as amber. His eyes were obliquely raised toward his temples; his ears, as

pointed as those of an animal, were closely pressed against his skull; he wore a hat with little balls and cords — the hat made this man resemble the priest of some unknown church. It seemed that the pupils of his narrow eyes were neither round nor smooth, like those of all ordinary people, but pasted together out of small, pointed little crystals. And, as if from a portrait limned by some skilled artist, these eyes pursued Clim ineluctably, no matter from what point he gazed upon this ancient, animated portrait. The round-toed velvet boots upon hideously thick soles must have been very heavy, yet the man stepped along noiselessly; his feet, without lifting themselves from the ground, glided upon it as if over oil or glass.

Behind him respectfully moved a group of men, of whom four were in national costume; bored, the dashing Governor Baranov walked alongside of General Fabricius, a commissary of the Pavilion of the Czar's Cabinet, wherein were put on exhibition the treasures of the Nerchinsky and the Altaian mines — precious stones, nuggets, and gold. Men with orders and men without, respectfully, in a close group, also walked behind the strange visitor.

Floating in his walk, this man of distinction passed from one building to another; his stony face was immobile — only the broad nostrils of his Mongolian nose occasionally quivered the least bit and the squeamish lip contracted, but its movement was perceptible only because the grey hairs at the corners of his mouth would bristle up.

"Li-Hung-Chang," people whispered to one another. "Li-Hung-Chang."

And, respectfully bowing, they leapt aside. This famous man of Cathay did not look upon people; the things he scrutinized in passing, and only before certain ones would he halt for a second, for a minute, dilating his nostrils, wagging his moustaches.

His hands lay on his abdomen, hidden within broad sleeves; but occasionally, evidently through surmise, or obeying an unperceivable sign one of the Chinamen would softly begin speaking to the commissary of this division, and then lowering his voice still more would speak to Li-Hung-Chang, bowing his head without looking into his face.

In the Military-Naval Division he spoke to him about the cannon; the old Chinaman standing immovable and sideways to it, eyed it askance for a few seconds — and floated on farther.

General Fabricius, having adjusted his mustachios, which were like those of a long and fierce Cossack from beyond the Volga, stepped out in front of his high guest, and with the gesture of a military commander pointed out to him the Pavilion of the Czar. Li-Hung-Chang halted. The Chinese interpreter fell to fussing and running around in circles, began to bow and to whisper something — spreading his hands, smiling.

"One must not walk in front of him?" loudly asked a man of dignified bearing with a multitude of orders — asked, and smiled. "Well — and is it permissible to walk alongside of him? What? Also not permissible? To anybody?"

"Precisely so, Your Excellency!" answered somebody in the voice of a crack coachman. The man of dignified bearing inflated his cheeks until they were red, reflected a while, and said in the French language:

"Ask the interpreter: Who, then, has the right to walk alongside of him?"

Everybody fell silent. Then the voice of the crack coachman said, but no longer loudly:

"The interpreter says, your Exalted Excellency, that he doesn't know; perhaps your — that is, our — Emperor, he says."

The man of dignified bearing touched the orders upon his chest and muttered angrily:

"Really . . . what ceremonies!"

General Fabricius fell in behind Li-Hung-Chang, also turning red and tugging at his moustachios.

In the Pavilion of Altai, Li-Hung-Chang halted before a showcase of coloured stones; he wagged his moustache; the interpreter immediately asked that the showcase be opened. And when they lifted up its heavy glass, the old Chinaman without hurrying freed one hand out of his sleeve; the sleeve, as if of itself, of its own power, rolled toward his elbow; the slender bony fingers of the senile iron hand descended into the showcase and scooped up from a white slab of marble a large crystal of emerald — the pride of the Pavilion; Li-Hung-Chang raised this stone up to the level of his eye, transferred it to the other eye, and having barely perceptibly nodded his head, hid the hand with the stone in his sleeve.

"He's taking it for himself," the interpreter explained this gesture, amiably smiling.

General Fabricius, blenching, began to mutter:

"But, really, allow me! For, really, I have no right to make any presents!"

The famous Chinaman was already floating out of the doors of the Pavilion and was going to the exit from the Exposition.

"Li-Hung-Chang," people were saying in a low voice to one another, and bowed low to one who resembled an ancient magus. "Li-Hung-Chang!"

The day was an unpleasant one. The wind dashed about uneasily, blowing up the sand of the road, pouncing out from behind corners. Clouds torn into small shreds scurried over the sky; the sun, too, was uneasily scurrying about as though solicitous as to how it might best illumine the strange figure of the Chinaman.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

[1] Source uncertain; probably from Nekrassov.

[2] Probably Turgeniev.

[3] Liev Tolstoi.

[4] Translation: Beat not with a stick, but with a coin.

[5] Iliya Murometz is the chief *bogatyr*, "mighty knight," of the Russian folk epos, a personification of the peasantry. After sitting without stirring for thirty years, he was made whole by some crippled palmers and embarked upon his mighty exploits, two of which were the overcoming of Solovei Razboinik, "Nightingale the Robber," and the overthrow of Idolishche, the "Most Huge Idol" (an embodiment of the barbarous southern hordes). Of all the mighty knights about Grand Prince Vladimir (the Slavic equivalent of King Arthur), Iliya Murometz was the mightiest and the manliest.

[6] Prince Alexander Yaroslavich Novgorodski, also called Nevski, inasmuch as he was victor over the Swedes, Norwegians, and Finns at the Battle of Neva, at its confluence with the River Izhor, July 15, 1740.

[7] Glieb Ivanovich Uspenski (1840–1902) began his literary career in 1861. Although a *narodnik* by conviction, his great talents and artistry in observation saved him from that basic fault of other writers of similar beliefs, a mawkish idealization of the seamy side of the people's life; his productions stand out through their verity and depth.

[8] Semion Yakovlevich Nadson (1862–87) was in many respects the Keats of Russia. His poems, beautiful in form and musical, are permeated with a pessimistic tone, probably due to his ill health.

[9] Mikhail Vassilievich Lomonossov (1711–65), the Russian counterpart of Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Johnson. Amazing parallels could be drawn between the lives of the three men.

[10] The Dekabrists were so called from their participation in the uprising of December 14, 1825, which had for its aim a change in the form of government. Some paid with their lives; others were exiled to Siberia and condemned to hard — almost inhuman — labour. The party consisted for the most part of military, aristocratic youths whose dream it was to introduce a constitution, emancipate the serfs, and establish free schools.

[11] Avvacum Petrovich: a celebrated schismatic; archpresbyter of the city of

Iureiev-Povolzhsky; noted as a preacher and a zealot for Russian orthodoxy; in 1665 rose up against innovations introduced by Nikon (Patriarch of Moscow and All the Russias (1605–81), defending the old ritual in many works and epistles; exiled to Siberia; sat in the earth-work prison of Pustoversk for fourteen years; indited a dire letter to Czar Phedor Alexeievich; burned at the stake for contumacy in 1681. His autobiography, *The Life of the Archpresbyter Avvacum,* is remarkable as a specimen of apt, forceful, concise Russian.

[12] Nikolai Vassilievich Uspenski (1837–89) was a fiction writer, a cousin of the writer described in footnote 7. He committed suicide after a life of misfortunes and poverty. Omulevski: Pseudonym of the poet, novelist and exile, Innokentii Vassilievich Phedorov (1836–83). Philip Diomidovich Nephedov (1848–1902), littérateur and ethnographer, pinned his hopes for a healthy development of the Russian people on the peasantry. Bozhin: Probably a pseudonym. Constantin Nikolaievich Staniukovich (1844–1903), an exile, wrote under the pseudonym of "The Frank Writer." His stories of the sea, among others, are excellent. Pavel Vladimirovich Zasodimski (1843——), belletrist, *narodnik,* depicted the miseries of the people. He lived practically in penury, and died in the clinic of a Moscow medical school. Vassilii Alexeievich Sleptzov (1836–78): His *A Good Man, Swine, The Cadaver, A Night's Lodging,* and *Hard Times* are very good. Pietr Dmitrievich Boborykin (1836——) is a belletrist and critic.

[13] Lombroso.

[14] *Petrashevtzi* was the general name bestowed in 1849 upon a group of young people interested in the socialistic ideas of Fourier, Saint-Simon and others. The founder of this group was Mikhail Vassilievich Petrashevsky (1819–67), whose sentence of death was commuted to indefinite exile. Dostoievski and the poet Pleshcheëv were among those who suffered heavy punishments, despite the really peaceful character of this group, which included among its members the poets Maikov-Vallerian and Apollon, the satirist Shchedrin-Saltykov, Bogosvetlov, N. Danilevsky, Chernyshevski, and other literary lights.

[15] *Narodniki:* Writers belonging to the *narodnichestvo* movement in Russian literature, having for its aim the treatment of the conditions and life of the Russian *narod* (people), for the purpose of improving its state on the bases of communality and the independence of the worker-producer. In everyday life the *narodniki* were known for their disinterested and self-denying labours toward the betterment and enlightenment of the *narod,* the tendering of medical aid, organizing, etc. The first place among these writers belongs to Glieb Uspenski (*q. v.*) and N. Zlatovratski.

[16] *Zhuliki:* Sometimes criminals, more dangerous or ingenious than others, will attain a sorry sort of immortality, their names being perpetuated as names for the crimes they have made especially infamous. Burke, the purveyor and maker of cadavers, may be cited as a gruesome instance. But a less known although far

more impressive example, inasmuch as it is generic rather than specific is found in the word *zhulik,* commonly used throughout Russia to designate a petty thief, cheat, or knave. Its nearest approach to an equivalent in English is the American slang term "crook." Yet exceedingly few know that Jacob von Julich was a German forger, boiled alive in oil during the Middle Ages for issuing false coin.

[17] Peter the Great.

[18] Nikolai Constantinovich Mikhailovski (1842–1904): Prominent critic, publicist, and sociologist; representative in legalistic literature of the *narodnichestvo.* Mikhailovski assigned the foremost significance to political freedom and the struggle for it. Certain of his numerous essays attained a wide celebrity: *What Progress Is, Heroes and the Mob.* Touching upon the movements affecting society most, they are distinguished for their easy grasp of literary, philosophical and social questions, and hold one's attention by their consistency and independent viewpoint.

[19] Petr Iakovlevich Chadaaev (1793–1856): Well-known writer and close friend of Pushkin. In 1836 his celebrated *Philosophical Letter* appeared in the *Telescope,* in which essay he sharply formulated his ideas, opposed to those of the Slavophiles, maintaining that Russia's destiny and path of development lay in the same ways as those of Western Europe. His exceedingly bold attacks against the sociality of Russia, his leanings toward Western culture and Catholicism aroused explosive indignation, and he was officially adjudged insane. The *Telescope* was suspended, and Nadezhdin, its editor, exiled. Four more *Letters* and *A Madman's Apology* were written and published abroad. Chadaaev, both in character and endeavours, was one of the foremost humanitarians of his day.

[20] Ezek. 18:20.

[21] Ivan Bolotnikov, serf of Prince Teliyatevski, was as a child captured by the Tartars, and later visited Venice. Returning to Russia in 1606, he became an adherent of the first False Dmitrii, or Dmitrii the Pretender, and, at the walls of Moscow, declared Vassilii Shuiski deposed. After a protracted contest with the Czar's military leaders he was vanquished. He surrendered and was condemned to death by drowning at Kargopol in 1607. Stepan Timofeievich Razin was the celebrated Stenka Razin, Cossack of the Don, Russian Robin Hood — a Robin Hood, that is, augmented by John Brown the abolitionist, Morgan the buccaneer, and William Tell the patriot. The Razin Uprising had great historical significance as a protest against the hardships of the people and the persecution of schismatics; it endangered even Moscow, and was quelled only after fearful wholesale executions and fires involving the death of a hundred thousand people. Razin was broken on the wheel in 1671. The best-known folk song about Razin surpasses even the *Chanty of the Volga Bargemen* in the beauty and eeriness of its melody. Emeliyan Ivanovich Pugachev (1726–75) was leader of the popular movement called Pugachevshchina in his honor, during the reign of Catherine the Great.

The son of a common Cossack, he took part in the Seven Years' War, and subsequently in the Turkish campaign. Upon returning to his native land he pretended to be the resuscitated Peter III, even going to the extent of contracting smallpox to make the resemblance greater. In 1773 he issued his famous "Manifest," promising to emancipate the serfs, and gathered about him a whole army of Cossacks, schismatics, and men of other than Russian birth. The Pugachev Uprising lasted for more than two years, and only in 1775 was he finally overwhelmed and betrayed to Suvarov, who despatched the pretender in a special cage to Moscow, where he was drawn and quartered.

[22] Pietr Lavrovich Lavrov (1823–1900): Author and socialist; Professor of Mathematics and Theoretical Mechanics in the Academy of Artillery; editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopædic Dictionary* and similar works. He was exiled in 1866, but escaped abroad in 1870.

[23] Mikhail Eugraphovich Saltykov (1826–89): Famous also under the pseudonym of N. Shchedrin. Celebrated as a satirist. Co-editor with Nekrassov of the *Contemporary*. Exiled in 1848. Shchedrin-Saltykov's satires are universal, and, in my opinion, he is the Slavic equal of Voltaire and the superior of Swift. So far as I know he is not available in English.

[24] I have not been able to locate this passage — or even book — in either the Apocrypha or the so-called "Lost Books of the Gospel."

[25] Gen. 3:15.

[26] Alexei Theophilactovich Pisemski (1820–81): Well-known author whose literary career began before he left his *gymnazium* bench. His first significant work was *Boyarshchina* (Russian Seigneurs), accepted by *Notes of the Fatherland*, but scotched by censorship because of too free an attitude toward marriage to be glimpsed between its lines. *A Thousand Souls*, *The Mattress*, and a drama, *Bitter Fate*, all enjoyed success. A great deal of excitement was aroused in the camp of the liberals by his most ambitious novel, *A Sea Stirred Up*, in which the progressive movement of the sixties is drawn quite unflatteringly.

[27] Russian version of Isa. 35:10. The English King James Version reads: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sighing and sorrow shall flee away."

[28] A *macquereau;* a man kept by a woman.

[29] *Liuto*, the first syllable of Liutov's family name, signifies "ferociously," "cruelly"; i.e., a ferocious, cruel pun.

[30] The reference here is, of course, to Prince Kropotkin and Count Tolstoi.

[31] *Narodovoltzi:* Members of the Party of the People's Freedom. This group split with the Party of Land and Freedom in 1878, setting up as its own immediate problem a political overthrow through terrorism. It was disbanded in the beginning of the eighties, after numerous arrests. This party should not be

confused with the Party of the People's Liberty (Constitutional Democrats), who believed in freedom through political action solely, and who came later.

[32] Dmitrii Ivanovich Mendeleëv (1834–1907): Famous chemist and physicist.

[33] Mikhail Alexandrovich Bakunin (1814–88): Anarchist. Sergeii Ghennaievich Nechaev (1846–83), revolutionary worker, was sentenced to twenty years at hard labour in 1873 for the murder of the student Ivanov, a *cause celèbre*. Vsevolod Mikhailovich Garshin (1855–88), author of the great war story, *Thirst*. Leontiev: I can find no Constantin of that family name, but from the fact that he is coupled with Constantin Pobedonostzev (1827–1907), jurist and leader in reactionary politics, we may infer that Leontiev has similar political convictions.

[34] *Neeva* (The Fallow Land): A family journal whose traditions were as hallowed as those of *Household Words* under Dickens.

[35] Count Sergei Iulevich Witte (1849–1915): Financier, statesman, politician; Russo-Japanese Peace Commissioner in 1905.

[36] *Narodopravtzi:* Members of the Party of the People's Rights, of republican and democratic leanings. To belong to either was a crime under the Czarist régime.

[37] Danilevski: Probably Nikolai Iakovlevich of that surname (1822–85), scientist and publicist. He wrote, among other things, *Darwinism* and *Russia and Europe*. Iskander (Alexander) Ivanovich Hertzen (1812–70): Publicist, pitiless critic of the civilization of Western Europe, profound and independent thinker; one of the most significant phenomena in the intellectual life of Russia in the nineteenth century. He was exiled to Siberia, and also lived abroad.

[38] Nikolai, Holy Archbishop of Myra, exposed the teachings of Arius at the Council of Nicaea. His holiday in Russia was celebrated on the sixth (eighteenth, New Style) of December. This is really our old friend St. Nicholas, but the Russian conception of him is entirely different from that of a jolly patron saint of children. In Russia, at the time treated of in *The By-Stander*, he was still an austere Father of the Church.

[39] Vassilii Ossipovich Kluchevski: A historian of skeptical tendencies.

[40] Nikolai Nikolaievich Zlatovratsky (1845——): A belletrist *narodnik*.

[41] Nikolai Alexandrovich Leikin (1843–1906): Born in a merchant family; wrote innumerable amusing but shallow sketches of the lives of merchants and simple folk.

[42] Nikolai Ivanovich Naumov (1838–1901): Belletrist; wrote stories of lowly life. Bazhin: Probably a variant spelling of Bozhin (cf. Footnote 12). Zasodimski: Cf. footnote 12.

[43] Georgii Valentinovich Plekhanov (1857——): First an active worker in the Party of Land and Freedom; later on played same rôle in Party of Black Reform. In 1883 he organized, abroad, the Party of the Liberation of Labour, and was editor of the Social-Democratic newspaper, the *Spark*. He wrote under

pseudonym Beltov. He is one of the chief theoreticians of Russian Social Democracy — a *Menshevik*.

[44] Nikolai Mikailovich Astirev (1857–94): Author of *Village Types and Sketches*.

[45] Named after Nikon (cf. Footnote 11).

[46] I Cor. 9:9.

[47] Ivan Phedorovich Gorbunov was born in the thirties, and died in 1895. He was a talented actor and *raconteur* of scenes in the lives of the humble. His *Stories* and *Scenes of Humble Life* were published in book form.

[48] Gregorii Otrepiev, a runaway monk from the Monastery of Miracles, is generally held to have been the pretender who was the First False Dmitrii, but the point is unsettled to this day. The First False Dmitrii, styling himself the Czarevich Dmitrii, son of Ivan the Terrible, was crowned Czar of Moscow in 1605, and eleven months later, in 1606, was assassinated by the *boyars* (nobles) headed by Vassilii Shuiski. The reign of this pretender was marked by many beneficent measures. The dissatisfaction of the *boyars* was caused by his independence, by the privileges he extended to serfs and petty officials, and by his opposition to the malfeasance of the nobles. The Second False Dmitrii, otherwise known as the Thief of Tushino (a settlement in the Moscow province), gave himself out as the escaped Dmitrii in 1607. Supported by the Cossacks and renegade Poles, he nearly seized the reins in Moscow, but was forced to flee upon learning of the approach of Sigizmund (the third of the name, 1566–1632, King of Poland and Sweden, who had supported the First False Dmitrii in order to wage war on Russia). This second impostor was slain in 1610. There was also a Third False Dmitrii, one Fideika, who appeared in 1611, but was easily captured and executed in 1613. Kozma (or Kuzma) Minin (also Minich), son of Zakhariev of the Withered Hand, was a butcher of Nizhni-Novgorod who, during the Troublous Time, summoned the people to the defence of Moscow, as a consequence freeing Moscow from the Poles. Minin was elevated to the nobility and counsellorship in 1613. He died in 1616. Mikhaila Romanov (of the line of ancient *boyars* dating back to 1280, when the founder of the Russian line [called The Mare] had come to Russia either from Lithuania or Prussia) laid the corner-stone of the last reigning house in Russia. He was chosen in 1613. Liutov, throughout, is using the more familiar, the homelier forms, of both Christian and family names. The first of March (thirteenth, New Style) marked the assassination, by a bomb, of Alexander II, and the ascension of Alexander III.

[49] Louis Antoine Léon de Saint-Just (1767–94): French revolutionist, one of the Triumvirate of the Reign of Terror.

[50] Nah. 1:2.

[51] Sophia Lvovna Perovskaya (1853–81): Leader of the Party of the People's Freedom and chief organizer of its terroristic activities after the arrest of Andrei

Ivanovich Zheliyabov (born 1851, hanged 1881). It was she who directed the assassination of Alexander II, for which she was hanged a little more than a month afterward. Vera Nikolaevna Figner (1852——): Prominent in practically all the activities of the Party of the People's Freedom from 1876 to 1883. Condemned to death in 1884, but confined instead in the Schlusselburg Fortress, from which, in 1904, she was exiled to Archangelsk. Abroad after 1906. Also known as a poetess.

[52] Dulcina of Novara (died 1307): Italian heretic and martyr, leader of the Apostolici, and founder, *ca.* 1300, of the Dulcinists, who rejected the Roman Catholic hierarchy and lived in apostolic simplicity as a protest against the worldliness of the church. Jan Hus (1369–1415): Bohemian preacher and reformer condemned by the Council of Constance and burned as a heretic. Translated Wyclif into Bohemian. A charming but apocryphal anecdote relates that he laughed at the executioners, saying: "After the tortures of translation I welcome this as a downright relief!" (John Dusenberry Balbach, *Ecclesiastical Table-Talk* [London, 1912], III, 297). Masaniello, or Tommaso Aniello (born 1622): A Neapolitan fisherman who headed the Insurrection of Naples against the Spaniards in 1647; assassinated same year. Herostratos: Lived about 356 B.C. He proved that the man who is his own publicity relations counsellor does not necessarily have a fool for a client. He set fire to the Temple of Diana of Ephesus, to immortalize his name. Whereupon couriers sped throughout Greece, proclaiming: "Let the name of Herostratos be razed from the memory of man, forever and aye . . ."

[53] Mikula Seliyaninovich: One of the senior *bogatyri* in Russian sagas; a personification of agricultural toil.

[54] Alexei Phedorovich Adashev: A statesman of the sixteenth century who exerted great influence upon Ivan IV. Between 1547 and 1553 he influenced the Czar to make many beneficial internal reforms. He was also prominent as a diplomat but fell out of grace in 1560. Retired to Livonia; imprisoned in 1561 and died in same year.

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